

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

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From selling cooking gas to N1bn in shortlet bookings: How two sisters built a 1,000-apartment business



FASHION

From Aso-Oke to Slow Fashion: Meet the Designers of 2026 Africa Fashion Week London



INTERVIEW

Education May Open Doors, But Confidence, Social Intelligence Determine How You Remain in the Room - Faith Morey

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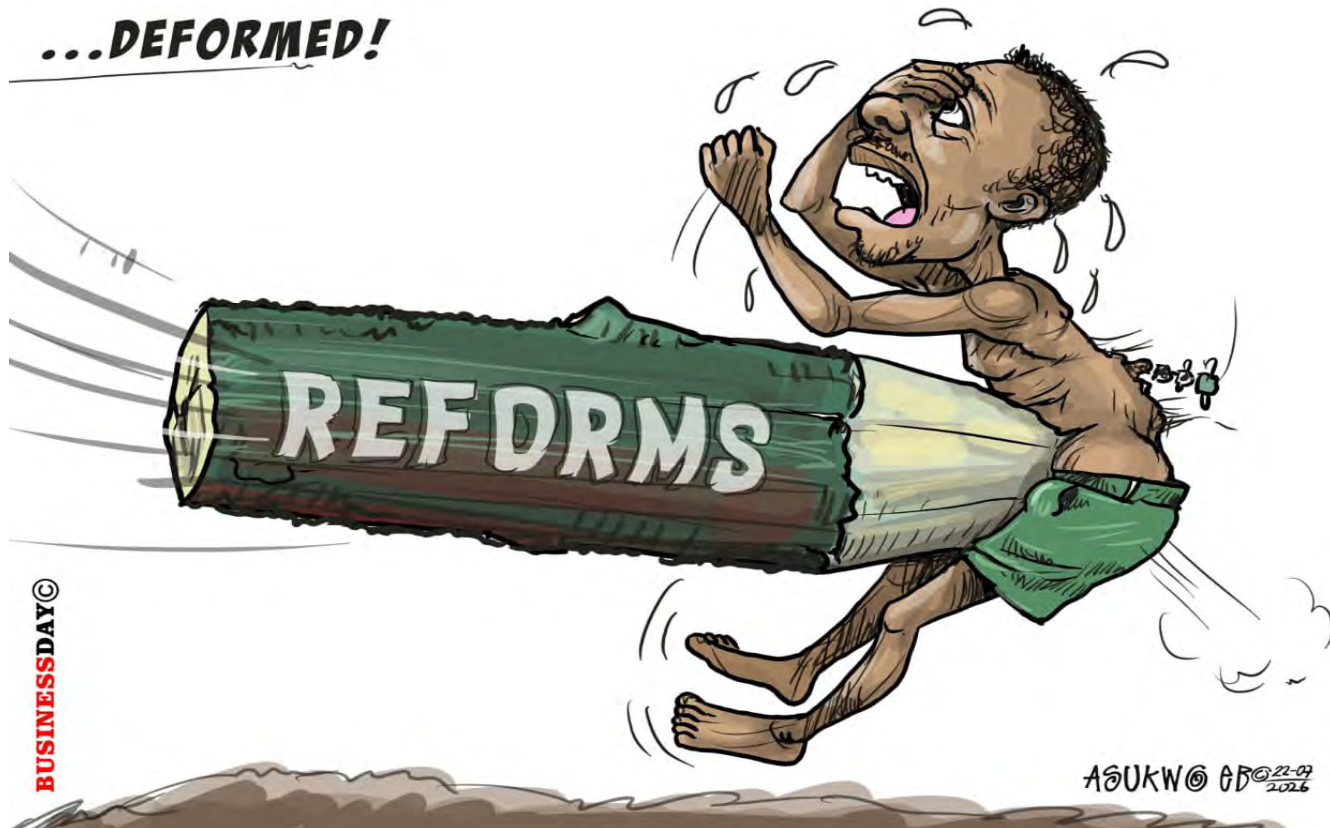
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FROM SELLING COOKING GAS TO N1BN IN SHORTLET BOOKINGS: HOW TWO SISTERS BUILT A 1,000-APARTMENT BUSINESS

CHISOM MICHAEL



Before Bisola Animashaun was managing one of the largest shortlet portfolios in Nigeria, she was delivering cooking gas.

She started Gasurgently at 21. The idea was simple enough, cooking gas delivered to your doorstep in Abuja, but the business punished her. Logistics costs kept eating the margins, and after three years of fighting for every single delivery, she took a decision most entrepreneurs never talk about publicly. She shut it down.

“People think the story starts when things work. Mine started when they didn’t,” she says. “Gasurgently taught me operations, customer service, how to survive when nothing is going your way. I didn’t know it at the time but I was in training.”

Today, Bisola and her sister Bukola Animashaun run Luxury Shortlets Abuja, a property management and booking agency with more than 1,000 shortlet apartments across Abuja and Lagos.

The company has hosted over 10,000 guests and facilitated more than ₦1 billion in bookings, most of them starting from an Instagram DM or a visit to its website, luxuryshortlets.com. It marked its fifth anniversary this July. In five years, the sisters have not taken a single kobo of outside investment.

The structure of the business is unusual. Bukola, who registered the company, runs the Lagos operation. Bisola, based in Abuja, handles marketing, brand and platform operations.

They are fifty-fifty shareholders, and they say that arrangement is the reason the company moves quickly.

"There's no boardroom politics when it's your sister. We disagree, we settle it, we move," Bisola says. "Decisions that take other companies a month take us a phone call."

In an industry where trust is scarce, the family setup has turned out to be more than a nice detail. Guests worry about fake listings. Property owners worry about damage and unpaid money. A business run by two sisters with a five-year track record has become Luxury Shortlets' strongest selling point.

The shortlet boom nobody planned Nigeria's shortlet industry grew in the gap between hotels and yearly rentals. Young professionals, diaspora visitors and business travellers wanted furnished apartments with privacy and flexibility. Landlords, for their part, discovered a well-run shortlet could earn far more than a traditional lease.

What emerged was fragmented and informal. Anyone with an apartment and an Instagram page could call themselves an agency, and the fraud stories multiplied.

Luxury Shortlets bet that professionalism would win. The company verifies every property in its portfolio, vets guests, and has built its Instagram-to-WhatsApp booking pipeline into a machine that now handles thousands of enquiries every month across two cities, alongside listings on luxuryshortlets.com.

Both cities stay busy all year round. But from October, the so-called Ember months, Lagos enters a different gear entirely, and by the December festive season demand can multiply as much as tenfold. A standard two-bedroom that goes for around N150,000 a night, or N250,000 and above at the luxury end, can climb to N750,000 and even N1 million a night in prime areas like Ikoyi, Victoria Island and Lekki Phase 1. Prime apartments get booked as much as two months in advance, and in December many owners insist on stays of two weeks to a full month.

"December Lagos is its own economy," Bisola Animashaun says. "If you're calling us in November for a December apartment, you're already late."

"We treat a N50,000-a-night booking with the same seriousness a hotel treats a corporate account," Bukola says. "That's the whole secret. It's not glamorous. It's consistency."

What N1 billion in bookings actually means Bisola is careful with the numbers. The N1 billion figure is gross booking value facilitated across the portfolio, not company revenue. Luxury Shortlets earns management and booking fees on that volume.

"I'd rather under-claim and over-deliver," she says. "Property owners hand us the keys to assets worth hundreds of millions. The least we owe them is honesty about our own numbers."

Ask her about Gasurgently and she doesn't dodge it either. "Every founder you admire has a Gasurgently. Most just hide it. I think mine is the reason Luxury Shortlets exists."

The research trips that looked like holidays For the past few years, while their peers put profits into cars and land, the sisters have been spending theirs on plane tickets. And taking notes.

Together they have travelled through Kenya, Egypt and Thailand. On her own, Bisola has studied South Africa, Seychelles, Qatar and China. Bukola took Ghana and Dubai, paying particular attention to how the Gulf city turned hospitality into an industrial machine. From outside it looked like two sisters enjoying their money. Internally, it was fieldwork.

"Thailand changed how I think," Bisola says. "A developing country that turned hospitality into a national industry. The systems, the standards, how they make a tourist feel."

Seychelles showed me what African luxury tourism looks like when it's done deliberately. Every trip we were asking the same question. Why does the world holiday there and not here?"

Their answer is Stay Afrik, the sisters' next venture, a travel company packaging African experiences for Western tourists, from the December energy of Lagos, Nigeria to the coastlines of East Africa.

"Nigerians have mastered hosting each other," she says. "The next step is hosting the world. Everything we've learned managing a thousand apartments, plus everything we've studied across three continents. That's where Stay Afrik is heading."

For now the focus remains what they have already built. Two cities, over a thousand doors, and a five-year-old promise that a booking with Luxury Shortlets means exactly what it says.

FROM ASO-OKE TO SLOW FASHION: MEET THE DESIGNERS OF 2026 AFRICA FASHION WEEK LONDON

...as Olori Ronke Ademiluyi Ogunwusi
Explores Beyond Catwalk

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



African fashion is having a global moment, and for good reason. Its fearless creativity, deep cultural roots, and modern silhouettes are now staples on international runways.

Leading that charge is Olori Ronke Ademiluyi-Ogunwusi, Queen of the Ooni of Ife and founder of Africa Fashion Week London. Her vision has been instrumental in positioning African design on the world stage.

She also created Africa Fashion Week Nigeria — the sister platform to AFWL — which returns to Lagos this December as part of the highly anticipated Detty December festivities.

Since launching in 2011, AFWL has grown far beyond a runway. It's now a key bridge between African designers and the global fashion economy: buyers, retailers, investors, and new audiences. Through partnerships like the British Council's Creative DNA programme and the Adire Oodua Textile Hub, AFWL champions creativity while driving education,

entrepreneurship, and the preservation of African textile heritage. Now in its 16th year, AFWL returns to Central London from August 17 to 23. The lineup brings together the continent's most exciting established and emerging names, for collections that speak to innovation, craftsmanship, and the growing global influence of African fashion.

Meet some of the designers set to rip the runway this season.

Juoby & Co:

Juoby & Co. is a contemporary Nigerian fashion brand that creates bold, stylish, and culturally inspired ready-to-wear pieces for the modern woman. Rooted in creativity and individuality, the brand is known for blending vibrant colors, playful silhouettes, and indigenous fabrics with modern fashion-forward designs that celebrate both heritage and self-expression.

At the heart of Juoby & Co. is a passion for redefining how traditional African textiles are seen and worn. The brand transforms locally sourced fabrics such as adire, George, and other indigenous materials into elevated everyday pieces that feel chic, wearable, and globally relevant. From statement co-ords and structured dresses to experimental silhouettes and easy luxury staples, each collection is designed to make women feel confident, stylish, and unforgettable.

Dian Magesa Fashion:

DianaMagesa is brand based in Tanzania dealing with upcycle to turn waste into valuable for make costumes for fashion, music , film , program women and youth .Also brand have activities cleaning beach, from sea,and to protects creatures and sea flow, brand goal to have big industry which produce products from waste and it's going to clean environment, add value, to get new costumes, build skills, create new employment.employees



Claudia Byron

Claudia Byron is a Zimbabwean luxury fashion designer whose work is defined by refined femininity, structured elegance and a modern global perspective. Her brand focuses on contemporary womenswear that blends strong tailoring, elevated textures and intentional silhouettes with a distinct sense of identity and presence. Her design approach explores the balance between structure and fluidity, creating garments that are both expressive and wearable.



Kente Uncut

This is a collection designed by Aduhema, a third-year undergraduate who explores both tailoring and her cultural heritage through her work. For this collection, she developed a personalised kente cloth, drawing inspiration from traditional Ghanaian symbols to convey themes of empowerment, sophistication, and growth. Each illustration and silhouette has been thoughtfully designed by Aduhema, reflecting her artistic vision.

Add an Apron:

Founded in 2024, Add an Apron is a slow fashion brand founded by artist Adéqlá. Using organic cottons and hand-painting, Add an Apron provides unique, bold hand-painted designs on fabric. This brand is excited by promoting their signature concept of the apron as a fashion accessory

Klassic Unisex Couture:

Klassic unisex couture is a contemporary fashion brand dedicated to redefining African craftsmanship through modern, globally inspired design. Specializing in unisex couture, the brands creates distinctive clothing using handcrafted Aso oke and Adire fabrics. Two iconic textiles deeply rooted in African culture and tradition. At Klassic unisex couture, every garment is thoughtfully designed to preserve the authenticity, artistry and heritage of these handcrafted materials while introducing fresh silhouette and contemporary styling.



MaeHem by Reverse Psychology London:

MaeHem by Reverse Psychology London is a contemporary British luxury fashion brand founded by Stella Mae of Nigerian heritage, in 2018. Built on the philosophy of "We Merge Cultures to Couture."

Through bold tailoring, sustainable design and the fusion of global cultural influences, MaeHem creates distinctive collections that celebrate Individuality, Craftsmanship, Unity & Music.

From statement couture to luxury boutique, Signature Hoods and hospitality collections, the brand reimagines traditional influences through a modern lens, creating pieces that are elegant, purposeful and globally relevant and sustainable

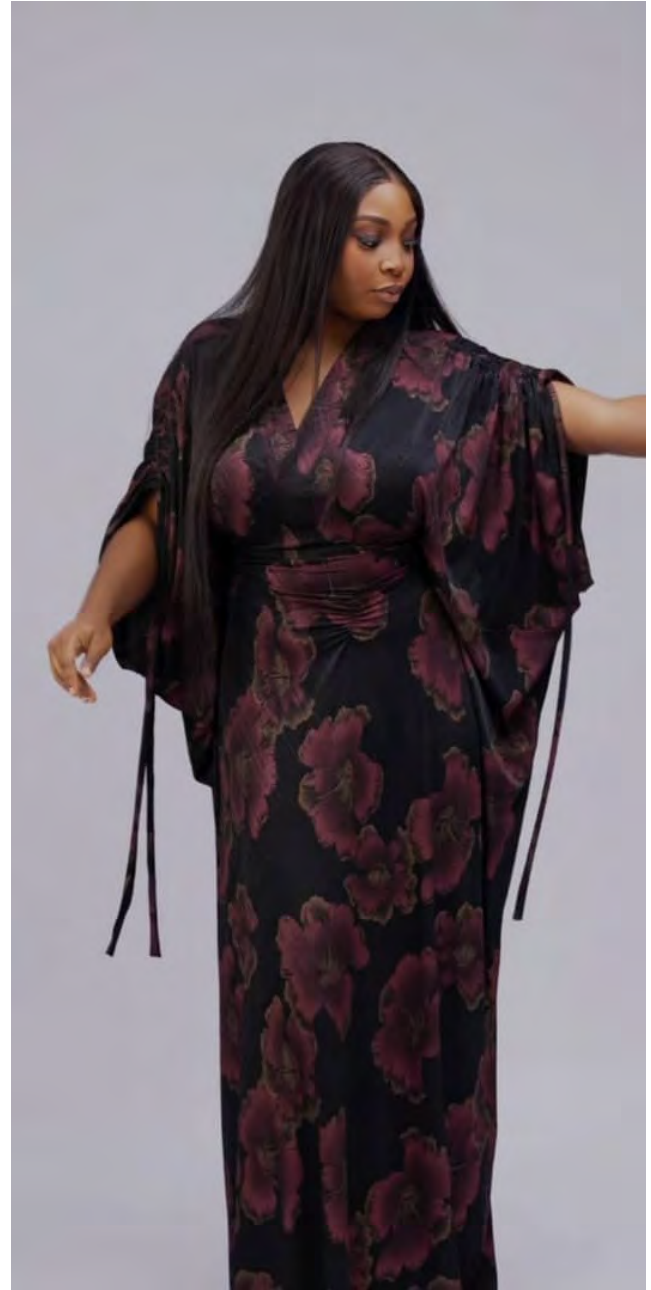


Simeogieme:

Simeogieme is a luxury fashion brand that blends simplicity, sensuality, and sophistication. Founder and Creative Director, Osime Saibu, is a fashion enthusiast with a passion for designing clothing and accessories, as well as painting art and creating patterns, with which the fabrics for her clothes are created.

Her collections are inspired by bold patterns, vibrant colours, and artistic influences, designed for women who embrace elegance and individuality.

Each piece offers a striking combination of creativity and craftsmanship, ensuring a unique style statement. Perfect for those who love to stand out with grace and confidence.



BKDY

BKDY is a fresh and innovative clothing line founded by Olubukola Adeyemi. Drawing inspiration from her backgrounds and passion for fashion, BKDY aims to create stylish, high-quality apparel that resonates with young, middle-aged trend-conscious consumers.

The brand focuses on providing unique, comfortable, and versatile pieces that can be seamlessly integrated into everyday wardrobes.

EDUCATION MAY OPEN DOORS, BUT CONFIDENCE, SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE DETERMINE HOW YOU REMAIN IN THE ROOM - FAITH MOREY





Faith Morey is a Nigerian-American philanthropist, entrepreneur, and founder whose career sits at the intersection of social development, fashion, and cultural intelligence. As the founder of the Okachi Charity Foundation (OCF), she has spearheaded targeted interventions across underserved public primary schools in Nigeria, focusing on restoring dignity to early childhood education through infrastructure repair, learning materials, and mentorship. Simultaneously, through her platform Gracefully Faith Morey, her upcoming book *Things I Learned Before They Let Me In*, and *The Grace Circle* world tour, she is advancing conversations around emotional intelligence, presence, and social literacy.

In this interview with IFEOMA OKEKE-KOREIOCHA, Morey reflects on the enduring legacy of her grandmother, the psychological impact of educational deprivation on children, and why true social mobility requires pairing academic qualifications with emotional discipline and presence.

You launched the Okachi Charity Foundation in honor of your grandmother, Charity Okachi, who taught at Sangana Primary School. How did watching her work shape your view on public school infrastructure and the dignity of early education?

Watching my grandmother teach at Sangana Primary School and San Andrew gave me an early understanding of something we often overlook: the condition of a public school is a public declaration of how seriously a society

takes its children. Charity Okachi belonged to a generation of teachers who carried enormous responsibility with very limited resources. They did not only teach literacy and arithmetic. They taught order, self-respect, responsibility, and hope. In many communities, the teacher was one of the first people outside the family to look at a child and recognize possibility. But dedication cannot permanently compensate for structural neglect. A committed teacher still needs a functional classroom. A willing child still needs books. A family that believes in education still needs a school capable of receiving that belief.

My grandmother helped me understand that early education is where a nation first meets its future. If we fail children at that stage, we do not simply create an academic disadvantage. We weaken confidence, social mobility, economic participation, and the quality of leadership the country will depend upon years later. This is why OCF looks at infrastructure through a human lens. We are not repairing buildings for appearance. We are helping restore the conditions in which concentration, confidence, safety, and aspiration can grow.

Nigeria does not lack intelligent children. Africa does not lack gifted children. Too often, what is missing is the bridge between their natural ability and a fair opportunity to develop it.

My grandmother showed me that a teacher can open a child's mind. OCF exists because neither the teacher nor the child should have to perform that miracle alone.

Rather than trying to rebuild or replace existing public education systems, OCF focuses on strengthening them through infrastructure repair, learning materials, and mentorship. What made you choose a model of strategic support over total reform?

I have never believed that meaningful service begins by arriving in a community and behaving as though nothing valuable existed before you came. Public schools already have teachers who understand their pupils, parents who want better opportunities for their children, and communities with knowledge that no outside organization can manufacture. What they often lack are the resources, relationships, and sustained attention needed to make those existing efforts succeed. OCF therefore begins by listening. We ask: What is preventing this school from serving its children well? Is it an unsafe classroom? A lack of books? Children arriving without uniforms or shoes? Pupils falling behind with no additional academic support? Young people reaching adolescence without exposure to mentorship or a practical skill? Then we intervene where support can unlock progress.

I also deeply believe that the government must remain responsible for public education. A foundation should not replace the state, and philanthropy should never become an excuse for public systems to withdraw. But while policies are being debated and budgets are being

approved, a child is growing. Childhood does not pause for bureaucracy. Our model is therefore neither passive charity nor an attempt to build a parallel system. It is a partnership model. We strengthen the school that already belongs to the community, support the teacher who is already doing the work, and help the child who is already seated in that classroom waiting to be taught. The long term vision is bigger than what OCF can do alone. We want to create evidence of what becomes possible when the government, responsible businesses, civil society, other foundations, educators, and communities each bring what they have to the same table.

You've spoken about providing basics like proper uniforms and shoes to protect students from the emotional toll of feeling "less than." How much of OCF's work is about psychological confidence versus strict academic support?

I do not divide OCF's work into psychological confidence on one side and academic support on the other, because the child does not arrive at school in separate pieces. The same child expected to solve a mathematics problem may also be hungry, ashamed of a torn uniform, worried that their shoes will attract laughter, or sitting in a classroom whose condition tells them that nobody important is paying attention.

Nigeria is rightly having an urgent conversation about its out-of-school population. UNESCO has estimated that more than 20 million Nigerian children and young people are out of school. Government is working to bring millions of them into classrooms. But OCF is asking the next question: once we bring a child into school, what are we doing to make that child willing and able to stay? A child can be registered, wearing the title "pupil," and still be abandoned within the system.

In one of the Agege schools where we work, more than half of some classes may arrive without having eaten. We were also told that, in a typical week, four or five children may collapse or become faint from hunger. Imagine asking a child in that condition to concentrate. Hunger does not sit politely outside the classroom while a lesson is being taught. It enters with the child. It weakens the body, shortens attention, and turns a school day into something to endure rather than an opportunity to learn. The same is true of clothing. I have seen uniforms that have been sewn so many times that thread, rubber bands, and safety pins are doing the work fabric can no longer do. I have seen children wearing uniforms; several sizes too small, afraid that one ordinary movement will tear what is already barely holding together.

An adult understands the difference proper presentation makes. When you feel well put together for work or an important meeting, you tend to sit differently and participate differently. Why would we imagine that children are immune to that feeling?



A child who is constantly pulling down a short uniform, hiding a tear, or avoiding the playground because their shoes are broken is spending mental energy protecting themselves from embarrassment. That is attention no teacher can redirect toward a textbook until the immediate anxiety has been addressed. This is why uniforms and shoes are often among our first interventions. We are not teaching children that their worth depends upon clothing. We are removing a visible source of shame so their minds are freer to learn.

And then there is the classroom itself. A good learning environment is not decoration. It communicates order, safety, expectation, and care. When parents see a school being repaired, when qualified and committed teachers are present, when children have learning materials, skills-acquisition opportunities, uniforms, and the possibility of scholarships, families begin to view that school differently. Across the schools where we have tracked the response to these combined interventions, we have observed enrolment rise by approximately 32.5 percent. That figure tells us something important: families are not indifferent to education. They respond when they can see that the school is prepared to take their children seriously.

Our experience in Abuja taught us another lesson. We met children attending school without adequate learning materials, including pupils who had already decided that they hated mathematics. We introduced educational board games that allowed them to encounter numbers through play, strategy, and problem-solving. Children who resisted the subject began engaging because mathematics no longer arrived only as correction on a chalkboard. It became something they could touch, enjoy, and understand. That is academic support, but it is also confidence. Sometimes a child does not hate learning. The child hates the repeated experience of feeling unsuccessful.

So OCF's work is not about choosing between the mind and the emotions. It is about creating the conditions in which the mind can work: food in the body, dignity in appearance, safety in the environment, materials in the hands, encouragement in the classroom, and enough evidence for the child to believe, Perhaps I can do this after all. We must bring children into school, certainly. But we must also build schools that children do not experience as another place of deprivation.

Your core philosophy states: "Education may open doors, but confidence and social intelligence determine how people remain in the room." What was the specific moment in your own career—transitioning across modelling, media, and business—where you realized access alone wasn't enough?

I can trace that realization to one elevator ride. There was a CEO I had been trying to meet for a long time. I believed that one conversation with him could change

the trajectory of my business, so I had done what I thought preparation looked like. I had developed my presentation, organized my materials, researched him, and sent numerous emails requesting a meeting. I knew my business, and I believed deeply in what I was building. Then, quite unexpectedly, I met him. He was stepping into an elevator on his way to an emergency meeting. He recognized my name from the emails I had sent and said, "You have until we get downstairs. Tell me about yourself and what you have in your hand."

And I froze. I looked prepared. I was holding the presentation. I had spent years learning how to enter a room, how to stand, how to dress, and how to carry myself. But the opportunity had not arrived in the room I had imagined. There was no boardroom, no scheduled appointment, and no time to arrange my papers. There were only a few floors between me and the ground level and I did not yet know how to turn everything I had prepared into one clear minute. I later learned that this was what people called an elevator pitch: a brief and compelling explanation of who you are, what you do, what problem you solve, and why the person listening should care. It sounds simple, but nobody had ever taught me how to do it. I did not get the opportunity that day. That was painful because I knew I had the ability; I simply had not learned how to communicate it under pressure. But I also made myself a promise: no opportunity would ever meet me that unprepared again.

I practised until I could explain my work without hiding behind a presentation. I learned how to read the person in front of me, adapt quickly, and speak with clarity even when a moment caught me by surprise. Fortunately, I met that CEO again later. This time, I was ready. I still remember seeing him smile from across the room, the kind of smile that said, Now you understand. That encounter led to my first significant contract. That experience taught me something I have carried through modeling, business, and media: preparation is not only knowing what you want to say. It is being able to find your voice when life does not follow your script.

This is why I teach these skills now. Somewhere, there is another brilliant person holding a beautiful proposal, waiting for the perfect meeting, not realizing that their opportunity may arrive in an elevator.

While personal development platforms often default to targeting women, Gracefully Faith Morey caters to men, women, and children alike. Why is it critical to teach emotional intelligence and presence to young boys early on?

I have seen the answer to this question in my own son, who will soon be fifteen. I have watched him enter rooms that would have intimidated me even as an adult and hold a thoughtful conversation with senior executives from Fortune 500 companies. He is not performing or trying to sound older than he is. He knows how to introduce himself, listen, ask a sensible question, maintain eye

contact, and allow the other person to feel that they are having a real exchange with him. Afterward, people often walk over to me and say, "What an impressive young man," or jokingly ask whether they can take him home with them. As his mother, I am proud, of course. But I also understand that what they are responding to is not simply intelligence. They are responding to how he makes them feel in his presence.

That has confirmed something I learned much later in my own life: a child can be highly educated and still be unprepared for human interaction. In many African homes and, truthfully, in homes across the world parents work extremely hard to provide what they understand success to require. If they can afford it, they provide a good school, proper clothing, food, and perhaps opportunities they never had themselves. That sacrifice is enormous and should never be minimized. But we rarely sit with a boy and teach him how to enter a room, how to introduce himself, how to recognize discomfort, how to handle disagreement, or how to communicate what he feels without becoming aggressive or withdrawing completely. We prepare boys to earn a living, but not always to live well with other people.

The consequences eventually appear everywhere. They appear as capable adults who cannot build professional relationships. In the husband and wife who both feel unheard but only know how to defend themselves. In the talented candidate who loses an interview because no one taught him that eye contact, a greeting, a handshake, grooming, and the way he addresses people all communicate before his résumé is discussed. They also appear on a much larger scale. History has shown us what can happen when people have power but lack the patience to understand one another's language, customs, fears, and values. Cultural literacy is not simply knowing a few facts about another country. It is knowing that what communicates confidence in one culture may communicate disrespect in another. Many conflicts become more dangerous because people listen only to answer, not to understand.

That is why I want these lessons to begin with boys, not as corrections when they become men. A boy who learns to listen without feeling diminished will become a man who can disagree without destroying a relationship. A boy who can name disappointment is less likely to disguise it as anger. A boy who understands that his presence affects others will carry that awareness into friendships, marriage, fatherhood, business, and leadership. My son is not perfect, and that is not the claim. What I have witnessed is the advantage of giving a child a language and a social awareness that many of us had to acquire through painful experience.

We cannot predict every room our children will enter. But we can make certain that when the door opens, they know how to meet the human being on the other side. They appear as capable adults who cannot build professional relationships. In the husband and wife who both feel unheard but only know how to defend themselves. In the talented candidate who loses an interview because no one taught him that eye contact,

a greeting, a handshake, grooming, and the way he addresses people all communicate before his résumé is discussed. They also appear on a much larger scale. History has shown us what can happen when people have power but lack the patience to understand one another's language, customs, fears, and values. Cultural literacy is not simply knowing a few facts about another country. It is knowing that what communicates confidence in one culture may communicate disrespect in another. Many conflicts become more dangerous because people listen only to answer, not to understand.

Your upcoming book is titled *THINGS I LEARNED BEFORE THEY LET ME IN*. What does "the room" or "they" represent to you, and what is one lesson from that draft that felt most uncomfortable to write?

The room" is not one physical place, and "they" are not one group of people. It is any environment where the people already inside appear to understand a language nobody formally taught you. Some people inherit that language. They grow up watching how their parents receive guests, conduct business, address authority, recover from embarrassment, or sit confidently among powerful people. They do not call it training because it is simply life at home. Then there are people like me. We arrive intelligent and ambitious, but without the benefit of that exposure. We are learning the rules while being judged for not already knowing them.

That is what "they" represent in the title: the institutions, social circles, industries, and sometimes individuals who appear to possess the authority to decide who is ready, refined, connected, or acceptable enough to enter. But the book also asks a more difficult question: how long will we allow other people to hold that authority over our lives? *Things I Learned Before They Let Me In* is partly a memoir and partly the education I wish someone had placed in my hands earlier. People have seen Faith Morey on television, at events, in fashion, and in polished rooms. They have not always seen Chituru, the girl who grew up with four children sharing a small bed, who carried water, prayed beneath a faded portrait of Jesus, and watched television through a neighbour's window. The most difficult part to write was the opening chapter about my grandmother. It took me more than two weeks to finish because I was not simply remembering her; I was meeting her again in every sentence.

I wrote about watching her sell water at dawn, pick fruit, teach children, prepare for a traditional wedding, and suddenly emerge dressed with such dignity that the entire room adjusted itself around her. When I was younger, she was simply Bigmama. Writing as a grown woman, I could finally see the weight she carried, the sacrifices I did not understand, and the woman she had been beyond the role she played in my life. That was painful because some understanding arrives after the person is no longer here to receive it. I could thank her on the page, but I could not place the book in her hands.



The uncomfortable lesson was that we sometimes benefit from another person's sacrifice long before we possess the maturity to recognize it. This book is my way of saying: I see it now. I understand what you were building in me.

It contains the lessons that helped me enter unfamiliar rooms, but its deepest purpose is not admission. It is inheritance. I want the person coming behind me to receive openly what many of us had to learn through rejection, embarrassment, grief, and observation.

As you prepare for The Grace Circle world tour, how do you adapt your message when speaking to schoolchildren in Port Harcourt versus women navigating high-profile careers in global cities?

I do not believe I carry one message to a child in Port Harcourt or Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna and another to a woman or man building their career in Toronto, Ghana, London, or Los Angeles. The language changes, but

the heart of the message remains the same: Where you begin should not decide how far you are permitted to go. With children, I begin with what they can touch. I ask what they enjoy doing, what they are curious about, and what they imagine for themselves. I may be speaking to a child who has never met an engineer, designer, entrepreneur, or filmmaker. Telling that child to "dream big" is not enough. A dream needs vocabulary, exposure, and a pathway. That is why the Okachi Charity Foundation combines academic support with mentorship, practical skills, and career exposure. Sometimes a child does not lack ambition; they simply cannot name a future they have never seen.

With women and men in global cities, the conversation becomes more layered. They may already have the degree, title, wardrobe, and invitation. But many are still negotiating visibility, cultural differences, leadership, family, self-doubt, and the pressure to become someone else in order to succeed. To them, I speak about sustaining opportunity: how to enter a room without shrinking, contribute without over performing, build meaningful relationships, understand unfamiliar cultures, and remain composed when the room tests your character. But I do not speak down to the child or speak above the professional woman. Both deserve honesty. Both may be standing at the edge of an unfamiliar room. One is asking, Can a life like that belong to me? The other may be asking, Now that I am here, how do I remain without losing myself?

OCF helps children imagine and prepare for possibility. Gracefully Faith Morey provides the human skills that help people navigate that possibility. The Grace Circle builds the community around it, because no one should have to travel the entire distance alone. The school and the global city are not two separate worlds to me. I have lived in both. I know the child who begins with very little, and I know the woman who eventually enters the room people once told her was unrealistic. I speak to both because I am both.

Audiences know you through international media, fashion, and screen appearances like *The Real Housewives of Lagos*. How do you handle the contrast between the high-octane luxury portrayed on television and your grounded on-the-ground work in public schools?

I do not experience it as a contrast because I am the same woman in both places. The woman wearing couture on television still remembers carrying water in Port Harcourt. The woman stepping out of a luxury car still remembers walking long distances to catch a crowded bus home from school.

The woman sitting at an elegant table remembers when rice and beans were reserved for special occasions. Luxury did not erase those memories; if anything, it made me more conscious of how dramatically access can alter a life.

I enjoy fashion. I enjoy beauty, travel, and the life I worked hard to build. I do not believe a woman must diminish her success to prove that she has compassion. The question is not whether you own beautiful things. The question is whether beautiful things have made you unable to see people. When I enter a public school, I do not imagine that hardship automatically makes every child noble or helpless. I see intelligence, mischief, ambition, embarrassment, talent, and enormous possibility.

I recognize the child who is trying to appear fine while quietly measuring herself against classmates who have more. I know what it means to be in the same classroom but living in a completely different world.

Television also tested whether I could remain that same person under pressure. People have described me as the first non-toxic breakout from the franchise. I believe what they responded to was consistency. They saw a woman who enjoyed fashion and luxury but remained a mother, a founder, and someone governed by family values. They saw that I could be direct without becoming destructive.

In environments built around performance, authenticity can make people suspicious. They wait for the mask to fall because they cannot imagine that the calm person and the strong person might be the same woman. But there was no separate character for the camera. Fashion is one of my languages; service is one of my responsibilities. Neither is the whole of me. The true measure of my success is not that I can now enter rooms of privilege. It is that I can enter them without forgetting the children whose names have not yet reached those rooms.

When people look back at the footprint of both OCF and Gracefully Faith Morey, what shift in culture do you hope to have permanently anchored?

When our children look back, I want them to remember more than the books, uniforms, summer classes, or skills they received.

Children may forget the details of a programme, but they rarely forget the season in which someone made them feel that their life mattered. I want that memory to follow them into adulthood.

I want the child we teach today to become the volunteer who returns tomorrow. I want the pupil who received a scholarship to become the professional who funds another child's education. I want the young person, introduced to a practical skill to build a business and eventually open its doors to someone whose hands are ready but whose circumstances are not.

The legacy of OCF should not be a permanent line of people waiting to be helped. It should be an expanding circle of people who were helped and learned how to help.

Gracefully Faith Morey extends that legacy from opportunity into identity and relationships. I want a woman to leave our work, able to say, "I did not become someone else. I finally learned how to present the woman I already was." I want men to understand that provision is not the only language of love. A man may pay every bill and still leave his wife emotionally alone. He may place his children in excellent schools and still never create a home in which they feel safe enough to tell him the truth. I want men to discover that listening is also leadership, tenderness is also strength, and an apology does not reduce their authority.

I want people to tell us that a lesson helped them secure a job, preserve a marriage, repair a friendship, conduct themselves differently in conflict, or walk into an unfamiliar culture with respect rather than assumption because the real transformation does not happen only in our gatherings. It happens when a mother corrects her daughter with wisdom instead of shame. When a father gives his son language for feelings he was once told to suppress. When a family learns to disagree without wounding one another; when a successful person remembers the hand that once steadied them and turns around to steady someone else.

I hope that, years from now, our impact will be difficult to count because it will have travelled too far from its original source. It will live in schools we did not build, foundations we did not establish, marriages we never witnessed, children we never met, and opportunities we never knew our work helped create. That is the footprint I want: not a monument to Faith Morey, but a culture of people saying, "Someone once made room for me. Now it is my turn."



THE CITIZENSHIP DECISIONS AFRICAN PARENTS CAN MAKE BEFORE THEIR CHILDREN TURN 18

CHISOM MICHAEL



Most parents assume their children's citizenship is fixed at birth. In fact, childhood is a window during which a family can shape citizenship options, and most routes become harder, slower, or closed once a child reaches adulthood. This window has become a priority for wealthy families across Africa.

The World Citizenship Report 2026 (WCR), produced by CS Global Partners, found that family security and generational protection

now rank as the leading reason behind a second citizenship, ahead of planning for instability and ahead of asset protection or financial gain. Access to education and healthcare for family members ranked above business expansion. Parents, the data suggests, view citizenship as a plan spanning generations rather than a hedge for themselves alone. They want their children to study and work anywhere in the world, without visa restrictions, limited scholarships, or reliance on one country's passport.

Behind this urgency lies a drop in confidence around governance, a trend affecting high-net-worth families worldwide, and one that carries particular weight for African families. The WCR found that only 33.5% of high-net-worth individuals remained confident their existing citizenship would provide the same security over the next decade. Around 27% had lost confidence altogether and were seeking a second citizenship for their families.

For African parents, this concern often sits alongside a separate, long-standing frustration: the limits a single African passport places on travel, business, and study abroad. A second citizenship addresses both issues at once, offering a hedge against instability at home and freer movement internationally.

For some African families, particularly those with documented ties to Europe through colonial-era migration, intermarriage, or earlier generations who held foreign nationality, a citizenship claim may already exist in the family record. Several European countries grant citizenship to descendants of former nationals, meaning a child could hold a second citizenship without the family ever relocating. These routes are narrowing everywhere. Italy has placed a limit on how far citizenship can pass down the generations. Portugal has tightened its residence and connection requirements. Documentary standards are rising across the board.

Such claims also fade with time: relatives who can confirm a lineage die, and records grow harder to trace. A claim that requires little more than paperwork for a young child can become impossible for the same person once they are an adult.

Time spent in a country may be the greatest advantage a parent can offer. A child who lives, studies, and speaks a country's language builds up the physical presence, school records, and fluency that naturalisation systems demand, and that adults cannot

purchase or backdate. Language requirements that hold up adult applicants for years become routine for a child who grows up speaking the language at home or in school.

Where family history offers no claim, and relocation is not practical, investment migration provides an alternative. Citizenship and residence by investment programmes are built to include spouses and dependent children in a single application, at a fraction of the cost of standalone routes, with timelines measured in months rather than generations.

The Caribbean's programmes illustrate this focus on family, and have drawn interest from African applicants seeking a second passport with strong travel access. St Kitts and Nevis runs the world's longest-standing Citizenship by Investment Programme, set up in 1984, giving parents four decades of continuity to weigh against a decision meant to outlast them.

Both St Kitts and Nevis and Dominica allow applicants to include a spouse and dependent children in a single application. Neither imposes a residence requirement, and both recognise dual citizenship, meaning children keep their nationality of birth alongside the new one. Both countries are English-speaking members of the Commonwealth with stable governments. Both have channelled application proceeds into schools, hospitals, and climate resilience, through St Kitts and Nevis' Sustainable Island State Contribution and Dominica's Economic Diversification Fund, the same areas of security that parents say they are seeking for their children.

For African families weighing these options, the message from the data is consistent: the earlier the decision, the wider the range of choices available, and the lower the cost of keeping them open.

NIGERIA AMONG TOP 10 COUNTRIES WHERE PEOPLE TRUST THE NEWS MOST IN 2026

CHISOM MICHAEL



Kenya and Nigeria have topped the global ranking of countries with the highest levels of trust in news in 2026, according to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's Digital News Report 2026.

The report, based on responses from nearly 100,000 people across 48 markets collected between January and February 2026, found that 68% of people in both Kenya and Nigeria said they trust most news most of the time.

While trust remains high in parts of Africa and Northern Europe, it is much lower in countries such as the United States, where only one in four respondents expressed confidence in the news.

Here are the 10 countries with the highest levels of trust in news in 2026.

1. Kenya – 68%

Kenya ranked first in the world, with 68% of respondents saying they trust most news most of the time.

The report said trust in news in Kenya has increased by about 10 percentage points since 2022. The country shares the top position with Nigeria, making Africa home to the world's two highest-ranking markets for news trust.

2. Nigeria – 68%

Nigeria matched Kenya with 68% of respondents expressing trust in most news most of the time.

The result places Nigeria ahead of every country in Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas included in the study. Like Kenya, Nigeria has recorded an increase of about 10 percentage points since 2022.

The report noted that data for Nigeria is based mainly on an English-speaking online sample.

3. Finland – 63%

Finland recorded the highest level of trust in Europe, with 63% of respondents saying they trust most news most of the time.

It remains one of the strongest-performing news markets globally and continues to lead the Nordic countries, where trust has generally strengthened over the past decade.

4. Denmark – 55%

Denmark ranked fourth globally, with 55% of respondents expressing trust in the news.

The country continues to perform well compared with most European markets, reflecting the strong position of the Nordic region in this year's report.

5. Norway – 53%

Norway secured fifth place after 53% of respondents said they trust most news most of the time.

Together with Finland, Denmark and Sweden, Norway reinforces the Nordic region's position among the world's most trusted news markets.

6. Hong Kong – 52%

Hong Kong ranked sixth globally with a trust score of 52%.

It was the highest-ranked market from the Asia-Pacific region in the top 10, highlighting stronger confidence in news than many neighbouring markets covered in the survey.

7. Sweden – 52%

Sweden also recorded a trust level of 52%, placing seventh in the global ranking.

Its position means four Nordic countries feature among the world's top seven markets for trust in news.

8. Portugal – 51%

Portugal ranked eighth after 51% of respondents said they trust most news most of the time.

It remains one of Europe's strongest-performing markets and joins Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands in representing the continent in the top 10.

9. South Africa – 50%

South Africa placed ninth with 50% of respondents expressing trust in the news.

The result gives Africa three countries in the global top 10, alongside Kenya and Nigeria. The report noted that findings for South Africa are based mainly on an English-speaking online sample.

10. Netherlands – 49%

The Netherlands completed the top 10 with a trust score of 49%.

Although just under half of respondents said they trust most news most of the time, the country still ranked among the world's leading markets for public confidence in journalism.

THE QUORUM: WHAT ANCHORIA'S INVESTOR FORUM REVEALS ABOUT NIGERIA'S WEALTH GAP, PRIVATE CAPITAL IMPERATIVE



In Nigeria's financial ecosystem, numbers rarely lie—but occasionally, a single statistic arrives with enough force to halt a room full of investment bankers and policymakers in their tracks.

That moment came inside a crowded hall at Four Points by Sheraton in Lagos during The Quorum, Anchoria's maiden investor forum. Delivering his keynote address, Doyin Salami, renowned economist and Chief Executive Officer of KAINOS Edge Consulting Ltd, dropped a sobering revelation: Nigeria's richest 1 percent now control 44 percent of the nation's total wealth.

Twenty years ago, that figure stood at 25 percent. The rapid concentration of wealth at the top represents more than a statistical curiosity; it is a stark reflection of a middle class eroded by systemic inflation, currency devaluation, and decades of structural de-industrialisation.

For a country where the World Bank estimates the poverty rate at 63 percent, the question facing macroeconomic planners and private investors is no longer just how wealth is generated, but where it flows—and whether the capital markets can bridge the widening divide.

To understand how the top 1 percent captured nearly half the national pie, one must look at what Salami terms the “decimation” of Nigeria's public balance sheet.

In 2011, the Federal Government's annual revenue stood at an equivalent of roughly \$72 billion. Fast forward to today, and despite record nominal naira collections driven by tax reforms and exchange rate adjustments, that same fiscal chest translates to a modest \$16 billion to \$17 billion. This shrinkage in real purchasing power has effectively paralyzed the government's ability to fund public infrastructure, health, and education on its own.



“Don’t throw away what the government is doing in terms of tax reforms, but it’s not going to immediately give you the fiscal space that you need,” Salami cautioned during the session.

Pointing to global benchmarks like Vietnam, which announced plans to mobilize \$1 trillion from international capital markets to build modern infrastructure, Salami argued that Nigeria’s path out of stagnant growth relies entirely on unlocking private institutional capital.

The second, deeper driver of this inequality lies in the systematic decay of the real sector. In the early 1980s, manufacturing and industrial output accounted for nearly 60 percent of Nigeria’s economic output. Today, that figure has plummeted to a fragile 16 to 17 percent.

“If industry—which transforms agriculture and mining into jobs, output, exports, and a higher level of living standards for the people—is not thriving, then we’ve got a big problem on our hands,” Doyin Salami, CEO, KAINOS Edge Consulting Ltd.

When factories close and supply chains break, capital flees from real production into speculative paper assets or real estate. The result? High yield for asset-owners at the very top, and persistent underemployment for everyone else. Reversing this trend requires capital market operators who do not simply trade existing wealth, but actively facilitate new productive capacity.

If public funding is constrained and industrial output is depressed, the financial services sector finds itself at a critical crossroads. Can investment houses mobilize domestic wealth into job-creating enterprises before the social friction of inequality escalates?

Addressing this challenge, Anchoria’s leadership outlined an aggressive strategy to bridge capital gaps across critical sectors of the economy. Speaking at the forum themed “Positioning for Growth: Investment Opportunities in a Changing Market,” Sam Chidoka, Group Managing Director emphasized that modern brokerage firms must act as financial engines rather than passive middlemen.

Currently ranked among the top 15 brokerage firms on the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) and the top three on the NASD OTC market, Anchoria is pushing to break into the top 10 on the NGX and claim the lead spot on the NASD platform before year-end.

Beyond secondary market trading, the firm’s investment banking arm has played an active role in structured corporate debt, helping insurance firms meet strict recapitalisation mandates by raising billions in fresh funding.

Esther Ugwu, Managing Director noted that in a volatile macroeconomic environment—marked by shifting interest rates, FX volatility, and global capital reallocation—wealth preservation requires shifting from reactive investing to deliberate, long-term asset positioning.

The ultimate takeaway from The Quorum is clear: Nigeria cannot tax or borrow its way into widespread prosperity.

Addressing a 63 percent poverty rate while 44 percent of national wealth sits with 1 percent of the population demands a systemic reset. It requires channeling high-net-worth liquidity out of passive storage and directly into primary issuance markets, infrastructure bonds, commercial paper, and manufacturing equity.



HOW FOOD INFLUENCERS SHAPE RESTAURANT CHOICES IN LAGOS

ESTHER MOEKPERE



A few weeks ago, I ordered from a food vendor an influencer had recommended repeatedly. The video was polished, with carefully presented shots of the food and a caption describing the restaurant as one of the best in Lagos. I placed an order almost immediately.

When the food arrived, the experience was different. The portion was smaller than expected, the rice lacked flavour, and the meal did not match the impression the video had created. It made me wonder how often people arrive at a restaurant expecting the experience they saw online, only to discover something else entirely.

That question is becoming increasingly relevant as food influencers shape the way people discover restaurants in Lagos. Spend enough time on TikTok or Instagram and it is easy to see their influence. A single recommendation can introduce thousands of people to a business overnight, while a viral video can turn an unfamiliar restaurant into one of the city's most talked-about destinations. For many diners, social media has become the first place to look before deciding where to eat.

That influence has been good for Lagos' growing food scene. Restaurants that once depended on word of mouth can now reach audiences they might never have attracted through traditional advertising. Food creators have helped spotlight neighbourhood cafés, family-owned businesses and new restaurants, making dining in the city more diverse and accessible.

But social media content serves a different purpose from a

consumer review. It is designed to capture attention. Videos are carefully planned, dishes are presented at their best, and every frame is intended to keep viewers watching. That does not make the content misleading; it is simply how content creation works. The challenge begins when viewers interpret a polished piece of content as an objective assessment of what every customer should expect.

The growth of influencer marketing adds another layer. Many creators are invited to restaurants, receive complimentary meals or are paid to feature a business. That does not automatically make their recommendations dishonest, nor does it mean they did not genuinely enjoy the experience. However, promotional content naturally aims to highlight positives rather than shortcomings. When viewers are unaware that a recommendation is part of a commercial partnership, or simply forget that it is, they may give it more weight than they otherwise would.

Even where no payment is involved, a recommendation still reflects one person's experience on one particular visit. It cannot tell viewers whether the same quality, service or portions are delivered consistently to every customer. Yet many people understandably watch these videos as though they are reliable predictors of their own experience.

The result is a growing trust gap. Anyone who scrolls through the comments on popular restaurant videos will notice a familiar pattern. Alongside enthusiastic reactions are customers describing long waits, disappointing portions, average meals or service that fell below expectations. These comments do not necessarily prove that the influencer was wrong or that the restaurant is poor. They simply illustrate that a promotional video and an everyday customer experience are not always the same thing.

None of this is an argument against food influencers. They have become an important part of Lagos' food ecosystem, helping businesses grow and making it easier for consumers to discover new places. Many restaurants owe part of their success to creators who introduced them to wider audiences, and many influencers have built their reputations by sharing recommendations they genuinely believe in.

As influencer marketing continues to mature, however, credibility will become just as valuable as reach. Creators who are transparent about commercial partnerships and measured in their recommendations are likely to earn greater trust over time. Consumers, for their part, should remember that a recommendation is exactly that, a recommendation, not an objective review or a guarantee of the experience they will have.

The gap between online hype and the reality on the plate may never disappear completely. But recognising the difference between promotional content and independent consumer experience can help people make more informed choices while allowing influencer marketing to continue serving the businesses and audiences that benefit from it.

6 AFRICAN COUNTRIES NIGERIANS CAN VISIT VISA-FREE, AND WHAT TO EAT THERE

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Every few months, a fresh list of visa-free countries Nigerians can visit begins circulating online, and the conversation that follows almost always centres on logistics. How long you can stay. Whether you need proof of funds. Whether crossing into neighbouring ECOWAS countries is really as straightforward as people say.

What those conversations often overlook is the food, arguably one of the best reasons to travel in the first place. From the perspective of someone who spends more time thinking about food than itineraries, these six visa-free destinations have plenty to offer beyond easy entry.

If you are planning a trip, here is what should be on your plate when you get there.

Senegal – Thieboudienne (Ceebu Jën)

If Senegal had a national dish, this would be it. Thieboudienne, often regarded as the country's signature meal, combines fish with broken rice, tomatoes and a generous serving of vegetables cooked together in a rich, savoury broth. Nigerians who enjoy one-pot rice dishes

will find it pleasantly familiar, though the flavours are distinct enough to make it feel like a new experience. It is widely available, making it one of the easiest introductions to Senegalese cuisine.



Côte d'Ivoire – Attiéké with grilled fish

Attiéké is one of Côte d'Ivoire's best-known foods. Made from fermented cassava, it resembles couscous in appearance but has a light, slightly tangy flavour. It is commonly served with grilled fish, onions, tomatoes and spicy pepper sauce. The combination is simple, fresh and filling, making it a favourite for both locals and visitors.



Benin – Amiwo (Fat pudding)

Just across Nigeria's western border, Benin offers flavours that feel familiar while still having their own identity. Amiwo is one of Benin's signature dishes and a staple in many households. Made from maize flour cooked with tomato paste, spices and palm oil, it has a soft texture and a rich, savoury flavour. It is typically served with grilled or fried chicken, fish, or a fresh tomato and onion relish, making it a hearty meal that reflects the simplicity and warmth of Beninese cuisine.



Rwanda – Brochettes

Street food lovers should make time for brochettes while in Rwanda. These grilled meat skewers, commonly made with beef, goat or chicken, are served with chips, fried plantains or roasted potatoes and a spicy sauce. Found everywhere from roadside grills to restaurants in Kigali, brochettes are simple but packed with flavour. Pair them with a cold local drink and you've got one of Rwanda's most popular casual meals.



Cameroon – Poulet DG

Poulet DG, short for Poulet Directeur Général (Director General Chicken), is one of Cameroon's most celebrated dishes. Once considered a meal reserved for VIPs, business executives and government officials, it has since become a favourite enjoyed far beyond the boardroom. The hearty one-pot dish combines seasoned chicken, fried ripe plantains and mixed vegetables simmered in a rich tomato-based sauce. The balance of sweet plantains and savoury chicken is one many Nigerians are likely to appreciate, especially those who enjoy plantain as much as the main course itself.



The Gambia – Domoda

Groundnuts are a staple across much of West Africa, but The Gambia's Domoda gives them a character all its own. Often regarded as the country's national dish, Domoda is a rich peanut stew cooked with beef or chicken and served over rice. The sauce is thick, nutty and mildly spiced, making it both hearty and comforting. Nigerians familiar with groundnut soup will recognise some of the flavours, but the Gambian version has a distinctive texture and preparation that makes it worth trying.



GTCO TO PUSH NIGERIA BEYOND AUTISM AWARENESS TO ACCEPTANCE AS IT HOLDS 16TH ANNUAL CONFAB



L-R: Solape Azazi, International Behaviour Analyst; Oyinade Adegite, Chief Communications Officer, GTCO Plc; and Osezusi Bolodeoku, International Behaviour Analyst, during the press briefing for the 16th Annual GTCO Autism Conference, held in Lagos on Wednesday.

After nearly two decades of driving regional public health advocacy, Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc (GTCO) is urging Nigerian society to move past baseline autism awareness toward structured, everyday inclusion.

At the press conference of its 16th Annual Autism Conference in Lagos, medical experts, behavioural therapists, and corporate leaders argued that while public recognition of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has grown significantly, many individuals on the spectrum continue to face severe discrimination, social isolation, and systemic barriers across homes, schools, workplaces, and public spaces.

The development comes against the backdrop of critical public health challenges across Africa. Global data indicates that Autism Spectrum Disorder affects approximately 1 in 100 children worldwide. However, in Nigeria, where over 60 percent of the population is under the age of 25, the true prevalence remains obscured by widespread under-diagnosis, limited specialized healthcare infrastructure, and deeply rooted socio-cultural myths.

For millions of families navigating ASD, the primary burden is no longer just securing a formal diagnosis, but managing the public judgment, stigma, and lack of support systems that follow.



L-R: Eziafakaku Nwokolo, Board Certified Behaviour Analyst; Solape Azazi, International Behaviour Analyst; Oyinade Adegite, Chief Communications Officer, GTCO Plc; Osezusi Bolodeoku, International Behaviour Analyst; and Oluwatosin Onabanjo, Corporate Communications Officer, GTCO Plc, during the press briefing for the 16th Annual GTCO Autism Conference, held in Lagos on Wednesday.

From Awareness to Acceptance

This year's conference, themed "Acceptance in Action: From Family to Classroom to Workplace to Public Spaces," signals a deliberate shift from educating the public on what autism is to enforcing practical, structural inclusion.

Segun Agbaje, noted that the initiative—launched 16 years ago under the bank's flagship CSR framework, the Orange Ribbon Initiative—has evolved into West Africa's premier platform for autism advocacy.

"Sixteen years ago, we set out to help families navigate a journey that too often felt isolating. Today, this programme stands as proof of what sustained commitment can achieve," Agbaje said. "This year's theme challenges all of us to move past good intentions and start making inclusion visible—in the way we design our schools, structure our workplaces, and welcome one another in public spaces."

Agbaje emphasized that building an inclusive society cannot rest on the shoulders of corporate social responsibility alone. "No single institution can build an inclusive society alone. It takes families willing to advocate, educators willing to adapt, employers willing to open doors, and policymakers willing to act."

Echoing these views, Oyinade Adegite, Chief Communications Officer at GTCO Plc, pointed out that because autism is a non-visible neurodevelopmental condition, public misunderstanding remains one of the largest obstacles to integration.

"Awareness is important, but acceptance is what truly changes lives. Acceptance is not a complicated idea—sometimes it simply means creating space for someone else," Adegite explained.



L-R: Cornelius Onuoha, Managing Director, RedGecko PR Ltd; Dr. Eziafakaku Nwokolo, Board Certified Behaviour Analyst; Solape Azazi, International Behaviour Analyst; Oluwatosin Onabanjo, Corporate Communications Officer, GTCO Plc; and Osezusi Bolodeoku, International Behaviour Analyst, during the media briefing for the 16th Annual GTCO Autism Conference held in Lagos on Wednesday.

“You do not see autism physically, but you see its impact on behaviour. Because people cannot see it, they often assume a child is stubborn or badly behaved, or that an adult is difficult.”

Over the years, the GTCO Autism Programme has become a leading platform for Autism advocacy and inclusion across West Africa, bringing together healthcare professionals, therapists, educators, policymakers, caregivers, and families to foster greater understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs).

Through sustained engagement and collaboration, the programme has helped advance conversations around acceptance, accessibility, and the support systems required

to improve outcomes for individuals on the spectrum.

This year’s theme, “Acceptance in Action,” reflects the need to move beyond awareness towards creating environments where individuals on the Autism spectrum are supported, and empowered at home, in school, in workplace, and public spaces.

The 2026 programme will feature expert-led discussions, workshops, and free consultation sessions delivered by leading local and international specialists in developmental and behavioural sciences, covering key areas such as early intervention, behavioural therapy, communication strategies, inclusive education, and caregiver support.

AFTER 32 PRESIDENTS, NIGERIA'S LAWYERS ELECT THEIR FIRST WOMAN TO LEAD THEM

CHISOM MICHAEL





Nigeria's legal profession has never had a woman win its top seat by ballot. Now it does. Oyinkansola Badejo-Okusanya, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, has been declared the 33rd President of the Nigerian Bar Association.

The vote took place on 18 and 19 July 2026, organised by the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association. She polled 12,317 votes, representing 47.18 per cent of ballots cast, ahead of Lateef Akangbe, SAN, on 7,934 votes and Olumuyiwa Akinboro, SAN, on 5,855 votes.

For thirty-two presidencies before hers, no woman had reached the office through election. One woman did hold the post before: Dame Priscilla Kuye, between 1991 and 1992.

She stepped into the role after President Clement Akpamgbo left to become Attorney-General of the Federation under General Ibrahim Babangida. Her path to the office ran through succession, not a vote. Badejo-Okusanya's path ran through ballots, cast by lawyers across Nigeria, counted, and confirmed.

She studied law at the University of Lagos before building a career that led to her conferment as Senior Advocate. Her win puts her at the head of a bar body that lawyers describe as the largest on the continent.

Word of the result spread beyond the profession within hours. President Bola Tinubu sent a message through his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, calling the result "a watershed in the legal profession and a triumph for merit, excellence, and

gender inclusion." He asked her to reach out to the lawyers she defeated and to work through the disputes that surfaced during the contest.

Atiku Abubakar, a former Vice President, sent his own message of congratulations. So did Kemi Pinheiro, SAN, and the African Women Lawyers Association, which described the day as belonging to "the Time of the Bold."

Badejo-Okusanya herself kept her acceptance message short. "Thank you for believing in our shared vision of A Bolder Bar That Works for Everyone," she said. She went on: "This is not the end of a campaign but the beginning of a greater responsibility. I will serve every member of the Nigerian Bar Association with courage, humility, fairness and accountability."

She named three commitments for her term: pay, opportunity and unity. "Together, we will build an Association where every lawyer has the opportunity to earn better, live better and practise better," she said. "The work starts now."

She takes over from Afam Osigwe, whose two years in office focused on judicial independence, the rule of law and constitutional democracy. Those themes will likely follow her into the role, alongside the questions raised by the election itself: disputes among camps, calls for reconciliation, and the weight of a title no woman before her has won by vote.

For now, the number that matters most is 12,317. Behind it sit thousands of lawyers who marked a ballot and, in doing so, moved a profession's history forward by one name.

HOW THE MAKEUP FAIR SERIES IS PUTTING NIGERIA'S RAISING MAKEUP ARTISTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Makeup Fair (AMUF15), held on July 11–12, 2026, at Palme D'or Gardens, Garki 2, Abuja.

Held under the theme “Born to Be Seen,” the competition placed the spotlight firmly on some of Nigeria’s emerging makeup talent and demonstrated the growing need for platforms that give creative professionals opportunities to move from behind the scenes into greater industry visibility.

The Abuja edition attracted more than 30 applications from aspiring makeup artists, from which 10 finalists were selected following a screening process.

All 10 selected finalists participated on competition day, bringing a 100 percent finalist turnout and reflecting the level of commitment among the artists selected for the competition.

Before a live audience and a panel of industry judges, the contestants interpreted the “Born to Be Seen” theme through their individual makeup looks, demonstrating creativity, technical ability and artistic expression.

Beyond creating marketplaces for beauty businesses, The Makeup Fair Series (TMUFS) has continued to invest in initiatives that support talent development and create opportunities for professionals within Nigeria’s beauty industry.

One of these is the Beauty Face-Off Competition (BFOC), TMUFS’ talent-development initiative designed to discover, showcase and provide greater visibility for emerging and mid-level makeup artists.

Introduced as part of TMUFS’ broader Social Impact and Industry Development initiatives, the competition provides makeup artists with a platform to demonstrate their skills before a live audience, gain industry exposure and connect with brands, professionals and potential opportunities.

That commitment to talent development was once again brought to life in Abuja as TMUFS hosted the 15th edition of the Beauty Face-Off Competition during the 15th Abuja

At the end of the competition, Glambynemo emerged winner, with Facesbyada taking first runner-up and Ellareebeauty emerging second runner-up.

The seven other finalists also received beauty products and gift items contributed by participating beauty brands, ensuring that every artist who made it to the competition stage was recognised for the work, creativity and commitment required to compete.

The support came from Nuban Beauty, Omaricode Beauty, Msmetics, Niya Beauty, Paula Beauty, Deegutu Beauty, Chee Lashes, Voan Beauties, Kaima Cosmetics, Flirtshade Cosmetics, Ceendies Creation, Sylvimak, Champion Skin CPD, Juba Cosmetics, Barney Beauty Pro, Aniepro Cosmetics, Kleenup Cosmetics, Dr Kayla and Fillybeauty Cosmetics.



The involvement of these brands highlights an important part of talent development within the beauty ecosystem: the role established and growing businesses can play in supporting the professionals whose skills and creativity contribute to the industry.

For many emerging makeup artists, talent is only one part of building a sustainable career. Access to visibility, professional networks and opportunities to demonstrate their abilities before wider audiences can be equally important.

This is the gap BFOC was created to address.

By placing emerging artists on a public platform within The Makeup Fair Series, the competition gives participants an opportunity to showcase their work beyond their existing client and social media networks.

The experience also allows them to build confidence, strengthen their portfolios and gain exposure to beauty brands, consumers and other industry professionals.

As Nigeria's beauty industry continues to expand, initiatives focused on talent development are becoming increasingly important. Makeup artists are not only service providers; many are also educators, content creators, brand collaborators and entrepreneurs who contribute directly to the wider beauty economy.

Through BFOC, TMUFS continues to complement its work in creating market access for beauty businesses with investment in the people and creative talent that help drive the industry.

Lagos is next

Following the Abuja edition, preparations are underway for the 16th Beauty Face-Off Competition, which will take



place on August 9, 2026, during the 19th Lagos Makeup Fair (LMUF19) Summer Edition at Classique Events Place, Oregun, Ikeja, Lagos.

The Lagos competition will open another stage for emerging makeup artists to showcase their abilities and gain greater industry visibility.

As the initiative grows, TMUFS also hopes to deepen collaboration with beauty brands, sponsors and industry stakeholders interested in investing in emerging talent and creating more opportunities for makeup artists across Nigeria and ultimately Africa.

MILLIKEN HILL: THE ROAD THAT BUILT ENUGU

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



If you've ever driven into Enugu from certain directions, you've met Milliken Hill without necessarily knowing its name. It's the winding stretch of road that curves along the edge of the city, with trees leaning in on one side, and the Coal City opening up beneath you on the other.

For a lot of people, it's the first real view of Enugu they ever get, and that's not an accident of geography.

Milliken Hill has long served as one of the city's defining gateways: a corridor that residents, cyclists, skaters, hikers, and photographers pass through regularly, and one that visitors are often pointed toward for a proper look at the terrain that gives Enugu its character. It's less a road than a vantage point.

Few places in the state offer that particular combination of scenic beauty and geological drama in one sweep.

More Than A Line On A Map

Say you're driving into the city on the old Enugu–Onitsha Expressway, off the present-day Enugu–Makurdi Road, on

paper, you enter Enugu State the moment you cross the Oji River boundary with Anambra. That's the gateway, in the strict planning sense: a legal line, nothing more. It could be any border crossing anywhere, really.

Nobody actually feels that line. What they feel comes later, past 9th Mile after the town of Ngwo, where the road narrows and starts to climb and the forest closes in on both sides. And then, at Milliken Hill, it all lets go at once: the canopy breaks open and the entire Coal City spreads out below, and you can feel an exciting sensation in your chest.

Planners have a language for this, and it's worth borrowing: a vista point — a natural lookout where the view suddenly opens; the view terminus — the payoff your eyes land on at the end of that view, and in this case, the skyline itself; a "psychological threshold" — the exact moment your brain registers that you've left one place and arrived somewhere else.

Milliken Hill is, more or less, a textbook case of all three happening at once, like a rush of blood to the head, a literal initiation into Enugu. The city has one legal gateway on this route and one real one, and they are

not the same place.

It's worth noting there are sixty-seven official entry points scattered across the state in total — seven of them major road gateways, alongside two rail gateways, one air gateway, and a single historic river port. Technically, Milliken Hill isn't different from any of those. It's really just the one nobody forgets.

How It Came To Be

The hill predates the road, obviously, but the story most people know starts in 1908, when a British expedition travelling from Awka toward the middle belt passed through Enugu Ngwo and reported the site back to colonial authorities in Lagos.

The following year, a team of mining engineers was sent to prospect for silver. They found coal instead — and that discovery is what put this particular stretch of land on the map.

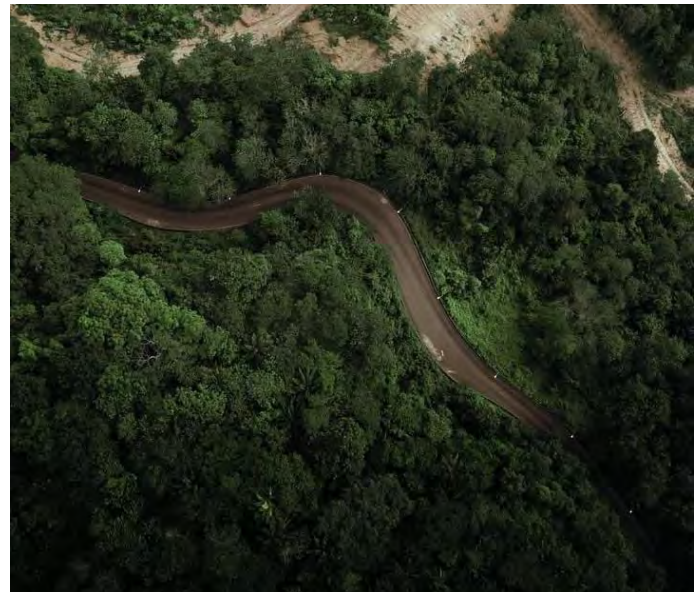


The colonial administration settled at the top of the hill, in what's still known locally as Hilltop, to oversee the new mining operations at Iva Valley, Onyeama, Ogbete, and Okpara.

Getting people and material down from that settlement to the city below required a road, so in 1909 colonial engineers led by WJ Leck carved one out of the hillside: roughly 4.8 kilometers long, with somewhere between 28 and 33 sharp bends depending on who's counting, cut directly into the rock along a deep gully.

It was named Milliken Hill Road after the principal engineer A.B. Milliken, a British colonial engineer who designed and supervised the construction of the famous winding road whose name is permanently attached to the landmark is.

Also William John Leck, who now has Leck Avenue located in the Government Reserved Area (GRA) named after him, was the chief British mining engineer who led the team of coal miners and immigrant settlers into Enugu to develop the mines.



For decades afterward, it was the only route in and out of Enugu from that direction — used by British officials, miners, and civil servants moving between the coast and the inland mining town, and later, during the Second World War and the independence movement, by troops and supplies passing through the region.

It stayed the sole route into the city for a long time, which also gave it one of the state's higher accident rates given how sharply it winds. The road wasn't reconstructed at all until 2018, under Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi's administration — the first real infrastructural attention it had received since the colonial government first built it more than a century earlier.

Where It Sits

Geographically, Milliken Hill is the third highest of the capital's major distinct high zones. The whole western boundary technically belongs to a single escarpment — the Udi Hills — but locally, the landmarks and vantage peaks break down roughly like this:

With Elenkwu and Ngwo Heights representing the actual ceiling of the state, sitting at 592m and 589m respectively, both resting on the highest spine of the Udi-Nsukka Plateau.



We Step Down as you move toward Enugu City, the land takes massive architectural steps downward. Ikirike Hills, sitting at 480m forms a massive upper wall, while Milliken Hill, known to the locals of Ngwo by the name “Ugwu Miriki” elevates up to 330m sits on a lower ledge right where the plateau breaks sharply into the valley. The Low Plain (Rank 5): Ede Hill at 310 m sits entirely off the main plateau structure, acting as an isolated mound on the low-lying plains.

What It Could Still Become

Just like you have the Iron Lady, also known as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, and the Statue of Liberty for New York as the anchor landmarks for these locations, picture an Iconic pavilion or beacon of some sort at the crest, something modest and well-built. A rail to lean on, a bench, maybe a plaque with some of this history on it. Somewhere a driver could actually pull off, step out, and stand still for five minutes instead of catching the view sideways through a windshield at thirty kilometers an hour. That's it. That's the whole ask.

It's a strange gap, when you think about it: a road that connects the untouched green of the Ngwo Pine Forest to the buzz of the State Secretariat, that gives every arriving visitor their first look at the city, still gets treated as pure infrastructure — just a way to get from A to B — rather than the landmark it clearly is.

The truth is, Enugu doesn't lack scenery. It just has never built anything to hold this particular view. But with small, deliberate investments, Milliken Hill could be the reason people plan a stop in Enugu, not just as the road they happen to pass through on the way to somewhere else.

A landmark's significance doesn't protect it automatically. Milliken Hill carries decades of history and a fair amount of civic pride, and it's still, at the end of the day, a shared public space, which means its condition depends on how the people around it choose to treat it.

That tension — between what the hill represents and what's actually happening to sections of it — is where the next chapter of this story picks up. For now, we just wanted to introduce it properly: this is Milliken Hill, one of Enugu's most iconic landscapes, and the reason this newsletter exists.

ROYAL CARIBBEAN NIGERIA UNVEILS SUMMER 2026 MEDITERRANEAN SAILINGS FOR NIGERIAN TRAVELLERS



Royal Caribbean Nigeria has officially welcomed Legend of the Seas to the Mediterranean for Summer 2026 as the newest addition to its Icon Class fleet, inviting Nigerian travellers to experience the beauty, leisure and excitement of a premium cruise holiday across the Mediterranean.

With summer widely regarded as one of the best periods to enjoy a cruise, the season offers Guests the perfect opportunity to relax, reconnect and explore multiple destinations in one seamless holiday.

Guests aboard Legend of the Seas will sail through the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean, visiting beautiful cities and enjoying a rich mix of onboard experiences, entertainment, dining and family-focused activities.

For Nigerian travellers seeking a refreshing summer escape, the cruise offers the convenience of unpacking once while experiencing several exciting destinations.

Whether planning a family vacation, honeymoon, milestone celebration, group getaway, school trip, church retreat, corporate retreat or first-time cruise, guests can

work directly with the Royal Caribbean Nigeria to select the itinerary, stateroom category and add-on experiences that best suit their travel plans.

“Each summer season presents an opportunity to make Legend of the Seas the perfect choice for every type of traveller on board,” said a Royal Caribbean Nigeria spokesperson. “Whether they’re families, couples, solo travellers, or large groups, guests can sail on the same ship and enjoy experiences tailored to their individual needs and interests.”

A Summer Holiday Designed for Every Traveller

The Summer 2026 season reinforces Royal Caribbean Nigeria's commitment to inclusive and family-friendly cruising. Legend of the Seas welcomes guests of different age groups, from infants as young as six months to seniors, with dedicated activities and spaces for children and teens, as well as a full range of leisure, wellness and entertainment options for adults.

For Nigerian families, this means parents, children, grandparents and extended family members can enjoy

a shared holiday experience without compromising individual preferences.

Children and teens can participate in age-appropriate programmes, while adults enjoy pools, fitness facilities, live entertainment, relaxation spaces, destination experiences and premium dining options.

Guests with mobility challenges can take advantage of accessible staterooms, routes, lifts, and seating areas designed to enhance comfort and ease throughout their cruise.

The cruise line can also accommodate dietary requirements, allergies, medical conditions, and sensory sensitivities when these are communicated at the time of booking. In addition, guests of all faiths are welcome, with religious and dietary needs supported where possible through advance notice, including vegetarian, vegan, kosher, halal, and gluten-free meal options.

Dining, Entertainment and Endless Onboard Experiences

One of the major attractions for Nigerian travellers will be the variety of dining and entertainment experiences available onboard. Guest cruise fare includes access to a wide selection of complimentary dining venues, offering up to seven meals each day.

Select beverages, pizza, soft-serve ice cream, coffee, tea and juices are also included.

For guests who want an elevated dining experience, specialty restaurants and premium dining options are available at an additional cost. Beyond dining, guests can enjoy access to pools, fitness facilities, youth program and nightly entertainment, while specialty dining, premium beverages, WiFi and select experiences can be added to further personalise the holiday.

The result is a complete summer experience that blends adventure, relaxation, hospitality and entertainment, all within one holiday package.

Perfect for Groups, Families and Celebrations

Legend of the Seas is also ideal for group and celebration travel. Nigerian families, friends, churches, schools, corporate organisations, clubs and associations can take advantage of coordinated arrangements for group travel.

Group bookings of a minimum of eight individual staterooms qualify for coordinated cabin, dining and activity arrangements under a signed group contract, subject to availability and applicable terms and conditions. Royal Caribbean offers tailored arrangements for birthdays, anniversaries, honeymoons, graduations, retirements and family reunions.

Guests may choose cruise-only passage or work with the Royal Caribbean Nigeria to build a complete

travel package covering flights, pre-cruise and post-cruise hotel stays, airport transfers, travel insurance and shore excursions.

Special Discount for Fidelity Bank Customers

As part of the Summer 2026 Mediterranean sailing season, Nigerian travellers can enjoy even greater value when they pay for their Legend of the Seas cruise using a Fidelity Bank Visa Credit Card.

Guests who make payment with their Fidelity Bank Visa Credit Card will receive a discount on their cruise fare, making it more rewarding for customers to book their Mediterranean summer getaway.

The offer provides an added benefit for Fidelity Bank customers planning international leisure travel, family holidays, group vacations or milestone celebrations during the summer season.

With its blend of exciting destinations, family-friendly facilities, accessible travel options, faith-conscious hospitality, diverse dining and onboard entertainment, Legend of the Seas offers Nigerian travellers a memorable way to experience the Mediterranean this summer.

Royal Caribbean International is a global cruise brand known for delivering innovation at sea, with a fleet of ships sailing to destinations across the Caribbean, Bahamas, Alaska, Europe, the Mediterranean, Asia, Australia, the South Pacific, the Middle East and beyond.



BRIDGING THE UK-AFRICA CREATIVE ECONOMY: MIRABELLE MORAH ON DESIGNING FOR COMMERCIAL VALUE

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA

Mirabelle Morah, through the Grohvie Design Fellowship, recently concluded the programme's second cohort in June 2026, having placed emerging designers on live briefs for organisations across the UK, Nigeria and Uganda.

Today, design portfolios have never been easier to build. What's harder to teach is how design creates business value, solves real problems and holds up under commercial pressure. That's the question at the centre of her work with the fellowship.

Nigerian born, Scotland based motion designer and creative director, Mirabelle Morah, launched the Grohvie Design Fellowship in 2025, five months after completing an MSc in Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of Edinburgh as a fully funded Mastercard Foundation Scholar.

The design fellowship is less interested in teaching design software than in teaching emerging designers how to think commercially, how to become people organisations actually want to work with, and how to turn creative ideas into measurable outcomes.

That commercial instinct traces back to Morah's own design practice. Before moving from Nigeria to Scotland, she spent years working at the intersection of design, advocacy and communications.

Influenced by multidisciplinary designers like Temi Coker, the writing of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and design movements from New Wave to Brutalism, she built a visual language that blends photography, illustration and motion, prioritising emotional connection over stylistic consistency.

Earlier work with National Geographic's Photo Camp, and time spent around animation and creative industry events, sharpened her instinct for pairing storytelling with motion design. That instinct now runs through the Fellowship itself.

The first design fellowship cohort Mirabelle worked with, understanding design leadership, she focused on removing common barriers to entry, offering fellows stipends and bringing in Scottish agency directors, creative leaders and senior product designers including those from Intercom to facilitate workshops.

The second cohort, running April to June 2026, went further. Four weeks of creative business strategy, portfolio development and client communication, followed by four weeks on live briefs for organisations across the UK, Nigeria and Uganda, including ATTA Breastmilk Community, a Ugandan NGO working to reduce neonatal mortality, as well

as the Social Enterprise World Forum in the UK and the Durian Foundation in Nigeria.

Mirabelle built the curriculum directly from what fellows said they struggled with.

"People don't only need design skills," she says. "They need to know how to turn those skills into work that creates value for businesses, charities, communities and even themselves."

Remarkably, across two cohorts, the Fellowship has drawn almost 300 applications, graduated 26 designers, held an 82 percent completion rate and recorded 91 percent participant satisfaction, figures that place it among the more rigorously tracked design education programmes operating between the UK and Africa. One fellow from the first cohort described the experience as a turning point:

"It's like a perspective shift for me. I was shown a whole other new world of possibilities. Hearing the stories of these important people made me realise that I can do all that I set my mind to." — A.P., Fellow, Cohort 1.

Morah still maintains the daily running of the Growhie Studio based in Glasgow. She continues to create commercial product motion designs and campaign assets for purpose-led startups and organizations including Elba Hope Foundation, started by popular English Actor, Idris Elba, as well as Shasha Networks which has supported over 100,000 young people across Africa.

Her designs, especially when it comes to motion, are often characterized by bright colors, mixed with fast paced movements that draw the attention of the viewer directly to the message she wants passed across. She uses color as a trigger to pull attention.

The Fellowship's real achievement is a working programme model where creative decisions carry responsibility, and where fellows graduate having already shipped work that mattered to real organisations.

Morah's underlying stance is that design leadership isn't only measured in campaigns, identities or motion graphics, but rather through her actions, can be seen to be visibly measured in the systems a designer builds for others to succeed in.

By that measure, the Grohvie Design Fellowship isn't a mere creative business and portfolio building programme, it's one of Mirabelle's most ambitious design projects; a system that applies design thinking to education, employability and social impact.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: THE MAKING OF NIGERIA'S FUTURE

CHARLES OGWO



The future of any nation is not built overnight; it is cultivated in classrooms, strengthened through innovation and realised in the marketplace.

Omo Aregbeyen, professor of Economics at the University of Ibadan, buttressed this ideology when he emphasised that innovation, research and entrepreneurship are the critical pillars for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria and across Africa.

Aregbeyen highlighted that in a knowledge economy, the most valuable asset is not what people have in their head, hence it is wrong for Nigeria to merely rely on its mineral resources without investing in human capital development.

"Though, Nigeria's wealth comes from oil, land, labour as resource economy, the most valuable asset is not what you have in the ground, but what you have in your head," he said.

To maximise the knowledge economy, Nigeria has opportunities in areas such as its young digital-native population, mobile penetration, which is above 90 percent, and a large internal market.

However, according to Aregbeyen, the country must close gaps in low R&D spending, weak industry, academia linkage, brain drain and poor research funding.

"We don't lack talent. We lack translation. In the knowledge economy, universities are no longer the custodians of knowledge. We must become the engines of its creation and application," he noted.

Across Nigeria, educators, students and entrepreneurs are proving that education is more than a pathway to employment; it is the foundation for economic growth, technological advancement and national development.

Emmanuel Eze, country director of HP Nigeria, toeing the views of Aregbeyen emphasised that Nigeria is not suffering from a lack of talent but struggles with converting its talent into skills that employers actually need.

Eze maintained that Nigeria's competitive advantage will no longer depend on the number of graduates it produces but on how effectively it equips them with practical, industry-relevant capabilities.



According to Eze, the problem lies less in academic qualifications and more in the lack of practical experience, digital literacy and collaborative skills demanded by today's workplace.

Study shows that poor learning outcomes significantly hinder human capital development by limiting an individual's ability to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies for personal and professional growth.

According to the World Bank report, Nigeria's Human Capital Index (HCI) in 2020 was 0.36. This score indicates that a child born in Nigeria in 2020 will likely grow up to achieve only 36 percent of the productivity they could have achieved with quality education and full health.

Stakeholders express worries that these half-baked youngsters would one day become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and professionals of tomorrow.

Kingsley Moghalu, the president of Institute for Governance & Economic Transformation speaking on the need for the country to embrace vocational education to develop its economy said; "Vocational skills are crucial for meeting the demands of a rapidly evolving labour market and supporting industries such as construction, manufacturing, and services.

Without a skilled workforce in areas such as plumbing, welding, electrical work, and automotive repair, Nigeria may struggle to meet infrastructure needs, maintain industrial machinery, and provide essential services. This can impede economic development and hinder efforts to build resilient and sustainable communities."

Education beyond classrooms puts skill development right at its centre. Nigeria's education must go beyond rote memorisation of facts to helping learners acquire various forms of skills that make them form a formidable human capital for the nation.

Educated citizens must be skilled to be able to create individual livelihoods, community wealth, and national value chains and thus effectively contribute to the economic transformation and global competitiveness of the nation, especially in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Christopher Itua, head of industrial services and development at the Institute for Industrial Technology (IIT), said vocational skills will not only transform Nigeria's economy, but will also elevate families from poverty.

According to a World Bank report, "Nigeria's poverty rate in 2023 was estimated to have reached 38.9 percent, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians living below the poverty line, the world's second largest poor country after India."

According to Kelvin Bob-manuel, senior communications coordinator at West Africa Vocational Education, to tackle youth unemployment, Nigeria must teach the self-motivated unemployed youth liabilities skills, and connect them to work opportunities.

Youth unemployment, underemployment and unemployability seems to be shooting up the sky as many youngsters lack appropriate skills that will empower them.

One of factors escalating unemployment in Nigeria is the mismatch between skills acquired in schools and the skills needed by the labour market.

The quest for certificates at the expense of practical skills, and entrepreneurship is seen fueling unemployment and underemployment rates in the country.

As Nigeria seeks to build a more competitive and resilient future, stakeholders agree that learning must extend beyond the classroom, equipping young people with skills, values and opportunities needed to thrive in an evolving global economy.



IS AFRICA RUNNING OUT OF LEADERS?

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

During a scholarship interview, one of the panelists asked me to share my Pan-African leadership vision. It struck me that they were asking the question because they were intentionally building something far bigger than a scholarship. They were investing in a pipeline of leadership-ready Africans they believed could lead institutions, shape policy, and influence the continent for decades to come. That conversation stayed with me.

Growth and development across Africa are creating unprecedented demand for capable leadership. Governments are expanding institutions, startups are scaling into regional enterprises, nonprofits are becoming continental organisations, family businesses are professionalising, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is creating opportunities that require leaders who can think beyond national borders.

Leadership, after all, is not something societies discover at the top. It is something they deliberately build all the way through.

So, What Does a Leadership Pipeline Deficit Actually Look Like?

Leadership pipeline deficits rarely announce themselves. They reveal themselves through the everyday behaviour of institutions.

The first sign is that we build organisations around personalities instead of institutions. Too often, when a chief executive, governor, minister, or founder leaves, performance leaves with them. Projects stall, priorities change, institutional memory disappears, and teams begin again from scratch. Strong leadership should leave behind stronger institutions, not institutional vacuums.

The second sign is weak succession planning. Across much of the continent, leadership transitions are treated as emergencies rather than deliberate processes. Potential successors are rarely identified early, stretched through increasing responsibility, sponsored into bigger roles or trusted with meaningful decision-making. Instead, authority is often concentrated in one individual until retirement, resignation or crisis forces an unplanned transition. We should not be surprised when institutions struggle to survive leadership changes if they were never preparing the next generation to lead.

Third, we have become experts at crisis management but not institution-building. Our leaders are often celebrated

for solving emergencies; fuel shortages, industrial actions, fiscal crises, or political disputes, yet far less attention is paid to designing systems that prevent these crises from recurring. We reward firefighters more than architects. Consequently, institutions spend much of their time reacting instead of building resilience.

Another indicator is that leadership development remains far too exclusive. Across both the public and private sectors, opportunities are concentrated among those with the right networks, prestigious credentials, or proximity to power. Meanwhile, talented professionals working quietly in middle management, the very layer from which future leaders should emerge, often receive little mentoring, sponsorship, or structured leadership development. A healthy pipeline cannot depend on chance encounters or personal connections.

Perhaps the most worrying indicator is the erosion of institutional trust. Increasingly, some of Africa's brightest professionals are not simply leaving because of better salaries abroad. Many are leaving because they no longer believe merit will be rewarded. When promotion depends more on patronage than performance, when expertise is overlooked, and when integrity becomes a disadvantage rather than an asset, institutions begin losing precisely the people they should be preparing to lead.

Finally, our education systems are still producing graduates faster than they are producing leaders. We continue to reward memorisation more than critical thinking, compliance more than curiosity, and examinations more than execution. Yet leadership demands something different: judgement, systems thinking, ethical decision-making, collaboration, communication, and the ability to navigate complexity. If these capabilities are not intentionally developed long before people enter the workplace, organisations are left trying to manufacture leaders under pressure instead of nurturing them over time.

Taken together, these are not isolated governance failures. They are symptoms of one underlying problem: we have invested heavily in filling leadership positions but far less in building the systems that continuously produce capable leaders. And until Africa treats leadership development as critical infrastructure rather than an individual achievement, the gap between opportunity and leadership capacity will only continue to widen.

So, What Would It Take to Build Africa's Leadership Pipeline?

If Africa's challenge is a leadership pipeline deficit rather than simply a leadership deficit, then the solutions must also be systemic. Leadership pipelines are not built by inspirational speeches or occasional leadership seminars. They are built through institutions that deliberately identify, prepare and transition leaders over time.

First, build institutions instead of personalities.

One of the greatest tests of leadership is whether an institution becomes stronger after its leader leaves. Too often across Africa, organisations lose direction the moment a founder, minister or chief executive exits because systems exist inside people rather than inside institutions. This means codifying how institutions work through strong standard operating procedures, institutional memory and governance structures that cannot be easily dismantled with every leadership transition. Incoming leaders should improve strategic plans, not replace them for the sake of leaving their own legacy. Botswana offers an important lesson. Through institutions such as the Public Enterprises Evaluation and Privatisation Agency (PEEPA), governance systems for state-owned enterprises have remained relatively stable across political transitions. Strong institutions, rather than changing personalities, have helped preserve long-term policy continuity.

Second, treat succession planning as a system, not an emergency.

Leadership succession should never begin when someone resigns. The strongest organisations are already preparing their next generation of leaders long before vacancies emerge. Every senior executive should know who is ready to step into their role tomorrow and who is being intentionally developed for the years ahead. Singapore has institutionalised this thinking through its Public Service Leadership Programme, where high-potential public servants are identified early and deliberately rotated across ministries over many years. Leadership readiness is continuously assessed, ensuring transitions become predictable rather than disruptive. Imagine if African organisations measured leaders not only by the results they delivered, but also by the leaders they produced.

Third, reward architects, not firefighters.

Across our continent, we often celebrate leaders for responding to crises. We should also reward those who quietly build systems that prevent crises from happening in the first place. Leadership should increasingly be measured by institutional resilience rather than emergency response. This requires moving away from budgeting based solely on expenditure towards measuring long-term outcomes, risk management and institutional preparedness. Chile provides a useful example. Rather than allowing national spending to rise and fall with volatile commodity prices, it adopted long-

term fiscal rules that encourage planning beyond political cycles. The result is a more resilient public finance system designed to reduce repeated crises rather than simply manage them.

Fourth, democratise leadership development.

Leadership opportunities should not depend on who you know, where you studied or how close you are to power. Africa cannot afford leadership development that remains the privilege of a small elite while capable professionals across local governments, civil society and the private sector remain overlooked. Rwanda has demonstrated another approach by investing in continuous leadership development across different levels of the public service through institutions such as the Rwanda Management Institute. Leadership training is no longer reserved for those at the top; it is deliberately extended across the system because pipelines are built from the middle, not just the summit.

Fifth, rebuild institutional trust through merit.

Leadership pipelines cannot thrive where merit is optional. Many talented Africans are not simply leaving because better salaries exist elsewhere. They are leaving because they no longer trust that competence, integrity and hard work will determine career progression. Restoring that trust requires recruitment and promotion systems that are transparent, independently assessed and protected from political or organisational patronage. The United Kingdom's Civil Service Commission provides one example of this principle in practice by overseeing senior appointments through independent, merit-based competition rather than political preference. Institutions become stronger when leadership is earned rather than allocated.

Finally, educate for leadership, not simply employment.

Leadership development begins long before people enter the workplace. If our education systems continue rewarding memorisation over critical thinking, obedience over initiative, and examinations over execution, organisations will continue inheriting technically qualified graduates who have never been taught how to lead. Ashesi University in Ghana offers an alternative model. Alongside academic excellence, it deliberately embeds leadership development, ethical decision-making, design thinking and real-world problem solving into the student experience. It recognises that Africa's future leaders must graduate with judgement, integrity and the ability to solve complex problems, not simply with degrees.

Ultimately, leadership is not a talent problem. It is an institutional design problem. Africa does not need to wait for extraordinary individuals to emerge. We need to build systems that consistently produce ordinary people capable of becoming extraordinary leaders. That, perhaps, is how we move from admiring great leaders to becoming a continent that reliably develops them.

NIGERIA'S DRUG CRISIS: SAVING TODAY'S YOUTH BEFORE WE LOSE TOMORROW'S LEADERS

TOMILAYO IMADE

"The youth are the leaders of tomorrow." It is a phrase generations of Nigerians grew up hearing. Yet, for far too many young people today, tomorrow is slipping away—not because they lack talent or opportunity, but because they have become trapped in the devastating cycle of drug abuse.

Twenty-five years ago, many Nigerians hardly knew what a rehabilitation centre was. Drug addiction existed, but it was neither as visible nor as widespread as it is today. Today, rehabilitation centres are increasingly overwhelmed, families are desperately seeking help, and universities are witnessing a disturbing rise in students battling substance abuse.

This is no longer just a health issue. It is an educational, economic, security and national development challenge.

Across Nigerian universities, brilliant students who once showed enormous promise are abandoning their education because of addiction. Young people who should be preparing to become doctors, engineers, lawyers, scientists and entrepreneurs are instead fighting battles that are slowly destroying their minds, bodies and futures.

I have personally seen gifted young people become shadows of themselves. I have watched families exhausted emotionally and financially as they struggle to rescue children they never imagined would become addicted. Behind every statistic is a parent

whose hopes have been shattered, a sibling carrying emotional scars, or a community mourning another wasted potential.

The consequences go far beyond the classroom.

Drug abuse has become a major contributor to mental health disorders among young people. Addiction can lead to depression, anxiety, psychosis and other psychiatric illnesses. Long-term substance abuse also damages vital organs, including the kidneys and liver, while increasing the risk of infections and other chronic health conditions. Sadly, many young people do not realise the damage until it is already advanced.

The social consequences are equally devastating. Addiction fuels crime, violence, cultism and financial desperation. Many young people become trapped in debt, lose meaningful relationships and sacrifice opportunities that may never return.

The entertainment industry has not been spared. While many Nigerian artists continue to inspire millions through discipline and hard work, there have also been highly publicised cases where substance abuse has damaged careers, reputations and lives. Celebrities occupy influential positions in society, making it even more important that healthy lifestyles are promoted rather than destructive behaviour.

The question before us is simple: **How do we stop this crisis from becoming even worse?**

The responsibility begins at home.

Parents must remain actively involved in their children's lives, even after they leave for university. Admission into higher education should not signal the end of parental guidance. Regular communication, surprise visits where appropriate, knowing their children's friends, and recognising early behavioural changes can make a significant difference. Prevention often begins with presence.

Educational institutions must also strengthen student support systems. Universities should invest in professional counselling services, establish confidential reporting channels, organise regular awareness campaigns, and create environments where students can seek help without fear of stigma.

Government must continue to tighten controls against the illegal distribution of dangerous substances while ensuring appropriate regulation of medications that are commonly abused. At the same time, greater investment is needed in rehabilitation facilities, mental health services and nationwide prevention campaigns.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has recorded notable successes in intercepting illicit drugs and prosecuting traffickers. However, the magnitude of today's challenge requires continuous investment in personnel training, intelligence gathering, campus engagement and community partnerships.

Enforcement alone cannot solve a problem that is also rooted in education, family life and mental health.

Religious institutions, traditional leaders, civil society organisations and the media all have critical roles to play. Young people need constant education about the realities of addiction—not through fear alone, but through honest conversations, mentorship and accessible support systems.

Nigeria cannot afford to normalise the destruction of its greatest resource—its young people.

Every student rescued from addiction represents another teacher who will educate future generations, another doctor who will save lives, another entrepreneur who will create jobs, or another innovator who will strengthen our economy.

Our greatest national asset has never been our oil, our minerals or our land. It is our people. If we fail to protect the youth from the growing menace of drug abuse, we are not merely losing individuals—we are losing the very future we hope to build.

The time to act is now. Saving today's youth is the surest investment in tomorrow's Nigeria.

Tomilayo Imade is a Nigerian writer and project management professional based in England. Passionate about social justice and human-interest stories, she writes thought-provoking articles on culture, mental health, gender, and public affairs. Through her writing, she seeks to challenge harmful social norms, amplify everyday experiences, and inspire meaningful conversations that drive positive change.

AFLOAT, BUT NOT ANCHORED

Four artists spent two weeks on Tarkwa Bay. What they brought back is a record of an island. In one case, a portrait of Lagos itself, built twice in salvaged wood.



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Dream City and Ugly
Floating City, side by side.
Artist: Darlington
Chukwumezie.



Two cities hang side by side on the wall. One is bright — pale yellows, sea greens, a tower of stacked blocks rising out of a jumble of painted offcuts, everything angled upward. The other sits low in deep blue water: a crush of white houses, tin roofs, a leaning lighthouse, a hull, all of it pressing in on itself as though the tide were still coming.

Darlington Chukwumezie titled them *Dream City* and *Ugly Floating City*. Both are assembled from wood the ocean gave back.

He is explicit about what the second one is for. “I build what we refuse to confront,” he writes — a skyline of weight and driftwood that mirrors the interior life of people who live in glass-tower cities and still feel unmoored. “We are afloat, but not anchored.” The lighthouse in the corner is deliberately imperfect: a flickering signal, half warning and half guide. Stand in front of it in Lagos in 2026, though, and a second reading is hard to shake. This is a city that has just come through some of the worst flooding in its recorded history, and that appears on every serious list of coastal megacities at risk of going under by 2050. A dense settlement of low white buildings, half-swallowed by blue — that is not only a metaphor here. It is a forecast. Set beside *Dream City*, with its optimistic vertical reach, the pairing reads as Lagos arguing with itself: the city that promises that if you can make it here you can make it anywhere, and the city that may not be here.

That reading is ours, not the artist’s. But the works hold it, which is the point of good work.

What the exhibition is

Echoes of Stillness opens on Saturday, 1 August 2026 at Patrons MCAA, The Civic Centre, Ozumba Mbadiwe, Victoria Island, and runs through Saturday, 8 August. It is presented by Farmhouse Residency in collaboration with Patrons MCAA, curated by Adebimpe Ajarat, and features Kolapo Olorunyemi, Elizabeth Ekpeteron, Josiah C. Josiah and Darlington Chukwumezie.

The show is the outcome of a residency, not a theme invented afterwards. In May 2025 the four artists spent two weeks on Tarkwa Bay Island under Farmhouse Residency’s programme, which sets artists to work on environmental conservation, human development and cultural preservation using a specific place as a case study. Tarkwa Bay was the case study. Everything in the exhibition was researched, made or begun there.

Tarkwa Bay is an artificial sheltered beach near the Lagos harbour, created in the mid-twentieth century during the harbour’s construction. Most of Lagos knows it as somewhere to spend a Sunday. The curator’s argument is that it is closer to an archive: a colonial-era landmark with a fishing community grown around it, a decommissioned 1956 lighthouse at its centre, a railway crossing that once carried people who were not travelling by choice, and a shoreline now under measurable ecological pressure.

Four ways of looking at one island

Darlington Chukwumezie has lived and worked at Tarkwa Bay for close to a decade and runs a mentorship programme for children on the island. Alongside the two cities, he shows *Earth 6.4006, 3.39593* — a globe named for the island’s own coordinates, built from discarded styrofoam and bound in fishing net, hung with bottles, driftwood, seashells and surfboard scraps. He shows *Fisherman’s Island*, and *Pako Boat*, a fishing vessel rendered as sculpture and read as a vessel of hope: every trip out is a risk, and the sea gives and takes in the same motion.

Kolapo Olorunyemi picked up the island’s litter and painted on it. His *Signal from the Shore* series consists of Afrofuturist portraits in oil on discarded satellite dishes recovered from the beach — women rendered with scarification, braided and threaded hair, traditional ornament, and headgear that belongs to a future that has not arrived yet. His *Harbingers* portraits are set inside salvaged tricycle tyres. The gesture is not decorative: the material is the argument.

Elizabeth Ekpeteron went to the lighthouse and did not find relief there. Built in 1956 to guide vessels into the Lagos harbour, it has been abandoned for years. “The average Nigerian has a maintenance problem,” she says, and her *A Beauty Forlorn* series answers the ruin with the most aggressive palette of her career — acid greens, hot pinks, electric oranges in acrylic and charcoal on damask cotton and paper. Bright as prophecy, drawn from something rusted.



Image: courtesy of FarmHouse Residency.
Artist: Josiah C. Josiah

Josiah C. Josiah attached himself to the fishermen. He was struck by how meticulous they are — nets mended, ropes coiled, tools kept — and by the fact that their worn-out ropes and nets are recycled into swings, beds and fencing rather than dumped. He works those found ropes and nets into large mixed-media pieces such as *Under the Palm Tree* and *Witch Bird (Fishing Birds)*, in the raw state he found them. His position on ocean plastic is behavioural, not technical: conservation, he argues, starts as a private discipline before it becomes a public outcome.

Also launching

The exhibition is accompanied by the launch of *Tarkwa Bay* (in the eyes of a visual artist) by Adebimpe Ajarat, a compilation of the artists' work and research from the residency; part catalogue, part field record of a place that is changing faster than it is being documented.

Why Patrons MCAA

Patrons MCAA is hosting the eight-day run at its landmark Victoria Island gallery.

"Patrons MCAA is committed to supporting young contemporaries and upcoming curators as part of our contribution to the ecosystem," Mr. Imo said. "Our

gallery department welcomes all who wish to host curated events and exhibitions." - Peter Imo, Managing Partner and CEO.

Visiting and acquisition
Echoes of Stillness

Saturday 1, August 2026
3–6pm

Monday - Saturday 8 August 2026
12-6pm

Patrons MCAA, The Civic Centre,
Ozumba Mbadiwe,
Victoria Island, Lagos

RSVP by email to art@patronsmcaa.com

Walk-ins are welcome throughout the run.

All works are available for immediate acquisition.

Collector enquiries to art@patronsmcaa.com

Farmhouse Residency on Instagram: [@thee_farmhouse](https://www.instagram.com/thee_farmhouse)



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

TRAPPED 2

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

...Continued from last week

Morning came.

She convinced herself that perhaps everything had been a nightmare after all. She went to work determined to resign immediately.

Before she could print her resignation letter, her boss walked into the office, smiling warmly. When she reached Celia's desk, she paused. Then she quietly asked whether she had received the envelope. Celia's blood turned cold. She didn't answer. Her boss simply nodded and continued walking.

The resignation suddenly felt impossible. That night, Celia visited a church instead of going home. She believed that if she stayed inside a 'holy place', she would not dream but she was wrong. She slept off and found herself inside the same conference room. The meeting had already started. Everyone watched her. The silver bowl was there with a piece of paper inside. Celia looked and read the words..."Your answer is due now"

She woke up on the church floor screaming. The Senior Pastor and workers rushed toward her. She decided to tell the pastor everything. She had barely begun explaining when the lights inside the office flickered.

The pastor suddenly froze.

His expression changed.

He stared past Celia's shoulder and he whispered..."I know her."

Then he passed out.

When he regained consciousness, he looked at Celia with complete confusion.

He did not recognize her. He could not remember seeing her before. He insisted they had never met. It was as though every memory of their conversation had been erased.

As Celia quietly stood to leave, something caught her attention.

The pastor raised his hand to adjust the sleeve of his shirt. For a brief moment, his left wrist was exposed. There was a small, unusual mark on it. Celia froze.

She had seen that mark before. It was the exact same mark on her boss's left wrist. She stared at it in disbelief. Her heart began to race.

A terrifying thought entered her mind.

She had come looking for help, only to find someone who bore the same mark as the woman she was trying to escape.

Without saying another word, Celia turned and walked away.

When Celia returned to work the following Monday, she sensed that something was different.

One of the desks was empty. The employee who used to sit there was absent.

When she asked where he was, someone said he had accepted a wonderful opportunity overseas.

At lunch, Celia secretly searched for his profile online. Every photograph, every social media account, every trace of him had disappeared. It was as if he had never existed.

Celia knew she had reached a point where fear was no longer an option.

This battle had to be fought and won.

She refused to become part of a group she had never chosen to join and no one would force her into a blood ritual against her will.

Instead of running from the problem or looking for someone else to fight for her, Celia took time off work and decided to engage in spiritual warfare. For three straight nights, she stayed awake praying. Whenever sleep tried to overtake her, she resisted it. She filled her nights with praise, worship and prayers. The fear that had once controlled her slowly disappeared. In its place came an unusual boldness.

She made up her mind that no matter what happened, she would never surrender.

On the fourth day, she returned to work.

The atmosphere in the office was completely

different. People stood together in small groups, whispering. She soon learned that Madam had been hospitalized.

The previous day, she had attended a business meeting with some prospective clients. During brunch, she had accidentally swallowed a fish bone and was rushed to the emergency unit. Everyone initially believed it was a minor incident. Then the doctors began discussing surgery. The office remained tense as everyone waited for updates from the hospital.

Suddenly, Edna hurried into the office. One look at her face was enough. Madam was dead.

No one could believe it. Some employees burst into tears. Others stood frozen in disbelief. The woman who had built the company, mentored them and led them for years was gone. Celia was stunned. She was shocked. She was relieved. And deep within her heart, she quietly celebrated.

For the first time since receiving the black soap, she felt as though the heavy chain around her neck had finally broken.

As the days passed, confusion spread throughout the company. Madam had never revealed how the activities in the spiritual realm were conducted. She never appointed an assistant. She never named a successor. No one knew how to continue what she had started.

The nightly meetings stopped. The strange dreams disappeared. Celia didn't wake up exhausted anymore. The office slowly returned to being just an ordinary workplace. One after another, employees quietly resigned. Some disappeared without saying goodbye. Others admitted they no longer felt the strange pull that had once kept them there.

Within a few months, the company that had once been the envy of many began to fall apart. Clients withdrew and contracts were cancelled. The business eventually shut its doors. Celia never spoke about what she had experienced. No one would have believed her anyway.

Months later, while walking through a crowded

market, Celia glanced at a woman selling black soap. As the woman reached for a bar, the sleeve of her blouse slipped back, exposing her left wrist. Celia froze. There it was.

The same strange mark she had seen on Madam's left wrist.

A chill ran through her body.

Was the woman connected to her former boss or the Pastor? Or was she looking at an entirely different cult? Celia quickly turned away and disappeared into the crowd, praying she would never find out.

Years later, the scent of black soap still made Celia's heart race. It was no longer just soap to her. It was the smell of fear, sleepless nights and a chapter of her life she prayed never to relive.

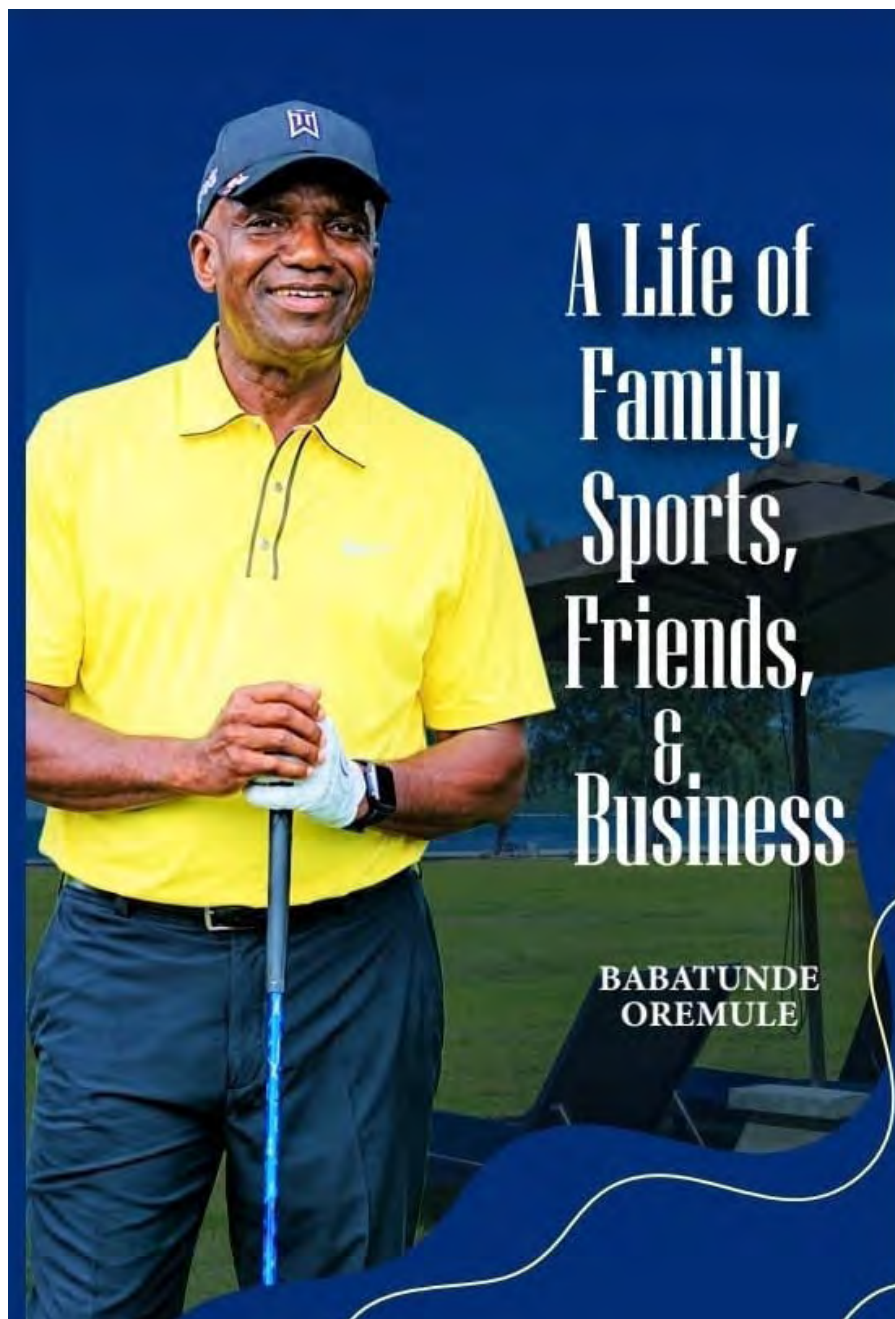


Udy Osaro-Edobor

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

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

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The Man Who Refused to Stay in One Lane-A
Review of Babatunde Oremule's A Life of
Family, Sports, Friends and Business

Title: A Life of Family, Sports, Friends and
Business

Author: Babatunde Oremule

Year of Publication: 2026

Number of Pages: 84

Category: Autobiography

A LIFE OF FAMILY, SPORTS, FRIENDS AND BUSINESS

TITILADE OYEMADE

Have you ever met someone whose CV sounds like it belongs to three different people? Airline owner. Shipping businessman. Pharmaceutical manufacturer. Real estate investor. Sportsman. Importer. Golfer. Lawn tennis enthusiast. Family man. Meet Babatunde Oremule.

By the time you finish reading *A Life of Family, Sports, Friends and Business*, you may begin to understand why friends call him Okunrin Meta, meaning “three men in one.” Even then, the nickname feels like an understatement. Somewhere along the way, readers may start wondering if the man secretly lived three different lives.

The gentleman smiling from the cover looks calm, modest and unassuming. Nothing prepares readers for the journey that unfolds inside. Every few pages brings another surprise. Just when you think you’ve figured him out, another business venture appears and you’re left thinking, “What exactly hasn’t this man done?”

This book celebrates a generation of Nigerians who refused to stay in one lane. If an opportunity presented itself, they chased it. Aviation today, shipping tomorrow, manufacturing next. Oremule approached business the way some people approach a buffet. If it looked promising, he was willing to give it a try.

One of the book’s greatest strengths is its conversational style. It never feels like a man trying to impress readers. Instead, it feels like an elderly uncle who has finally agreed to tell the stories everyone has been asking him about for years. The writing is simple, engaging and refreshingly free of unnecessary jargon, allowing the experiences to take centre stage.

Oremule openly celebrates those who helped him, acknowledges those who disappointed him and shares the setbacks that came with building businesses in Nigeria. At this stage of his life, there is little interest in polishing history. Readers get the victories, the failures and everything in between. One minute you are reading about business deals, the next about family, friendships, sports and mentors. Then, almost out of nowhere, comes romance. Yes, romance. It turns out Babatunde Oremule is quite the lover man. Beneath the accomplished entrepreneur is a hopeless romantic who never gave up on love.

There are moments while reading when the thought quietly slips into your mind, “Some people really enjoyed Nigeria.” But before envy settles in, Oremule reminds readers that every success came with challenges, betrayals and difficult decisions. The book never allows privilege to overshadow perseverance.

Perhaps one of the biggest surprises is the role sports played in his life. Before golf became part of his identity, lawn tennis had already opened doors, built friendships and business opportunities. Parents who keep saying, “Face your books and leave that ball alone,” may want to pay special attention to these pages.

The book is also filled with practical lessons on entrepreneurship, integrity, loyalty and the value of meaningful relationships. Oremule demonstrates that lasting success is built on more than money. It is built on trust, character and the willingness to keep learning.

As the pages unfold, some readers may find themselves wishing they were one of Oremule’s children or grandchildren, if only to inherit the stories, the wisdom, the entrepreneurial spirit and, let’s be honest, perhaps a little of the wealth too. Unfortunately, that ship has already sailed. The next best thing is to read the book, learn from his experiences, get out there, put in the hard work and create a success story of your own.

The only complaint is that the book ends too soon. By the final page, it feels as though Oremule has only scratched the surface of an extraordinary life. Reading the book is one thing. Sitting in a room and listening to him tell those stories himself would be something else entirely. Young entrepreneurs, sports enthusiasts and anyone trying to build a meaningful life would have much to learn from hearing him speak about the lessons, failures and opportunities that shaped his journey. If he ever decides to host a fireside chat, there would probably be a queue at the door. This is a small book that carries the weight of a much bigger one. It can be finished in a couple of hours, but its lessons stay with readers long after the final page.

By the end, one thing becomes clear. Babatunde Oremule did not simply build businesses. He built a life defined by curiosity, resilience, gratitude and the courage to embrace opportunity wherever he found it. If this book proves anything, it is that one life, when lived intentionally, can inspire many others.



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

MOVIE REVIEW

SHIPWRECKED: NIGHTMARE AT SEA (2026)

If you enjoyed the old iconic movie called Titanic, then this movie will be worth your while. This was more like a documentary where survivors shared their stories with videos and pictures while the movie played. This was a very emotional and intriguing movie, one that brought me to tears and sorrow. In this movie, a few families that survived told their various stories from their own angles and perspectives. One family a husband, wife, and baby, shared their experience. The husband explained how he had to fight to save himself, his wife, and their daughter when escaping the ship. That happened about 12 years ago, and today, his daughter has grown into a beautiful ballerina. One of the ladies explained that her life has never been the same because her mother never made it out alive. This was a compilation of different stories of families going onboard to have fun, only for that trip to become a tragedy they will never forget in their lives. The 87-minute documentary was directed by Chiara Messineo, and they featured cast members like John Scimone, Meghan Scimone, Patricia Sandoval, Nicholas Taliaferro, Stefania Vincenzi, Manrico Gianpedroni, Rose Metcalf, Manoy Singh, Barbie Nadean, and many more.



THE VOLCANO: RESCUE FROM WHAKAARI (2022)

So, I guess for me it's a back-to-back week of documentary movies based on real life happenings, just immediately after seeing Shipwreck, I decided to jump on this recently added one from 2022. In this documentary with videos and picture footage from the real events, different families share their experience also and how they fought for their lives. First there was this newly married couple who travelled for their honeymoon and decided to visit the island and take pictures, for some weird reasons, she was scared but went anyway as she was with her husband, they both suffered level 3 burns, but are still alive, the next was a family of three, father, mother and son, but they also made it out alive with level 2 burns, the pilot and guards also shared their experiences and how they had to protect and guide their people during the calamity. The honest truth was that none of them saw it coming and no matter how long and well you prepare for a mishap, what you actually do and how you react during the crisis is way different from preparing for it. This 98m documentary was directed by Rory Kennedy, they featured cast like Jesse Langford, Kelsey Waghorn, Brain Depauw, Lauren Urey, Mtt Urey, Mark Inman, John Fnnell, Pouroto Ngaropo and many more



NOTHING TO LOSE (2026)

Jada and her husband really loved each other, but there was one thing lacking in their home. They earnestly wanted to have a child, but it seemed that despite all their efforts, they couldn't conceive. They tried everything, and at some point, they started getting frustrated, and this took a toll on their marriage. After all their efforts, Jada decided to take their last option, which was to get a donor embryo and finally, that worked. She carried her baby and gave birth to a son. After some years, Jada's son fell ill, only for her to be informed that he had leukemia and needed a bone marrow donor. This had to come from a blood relative and had to be done within a few months. You will need to check out this movie to find out the lengths Jada had to go to save her son, and what she had to do to get a donor faster to avoid his death. Go check it out to find out if he survived. The 99-minute French crime drama was directed by Ludovic Colbeau-Justin and Nawell Madani. They featured cast members like Manmathan Basky, Fodil Benderbal, Nicolas Briançon, Aïssatou Diallo Sagna, Majida Ghomari, Guillaume Gouix, Nawell Madani, Olivier Sa, David Salles, etc.

