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# Diaspora CHAMPION

NO. 3 | OCTOBER, 2026 | N5,000, €5



## Global Diaspora Champions Award 2026

## PORTO, PORTUGAL

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YORUBA COMMUNITY
PALMA DE MALLORCA

# YORUBA COMMUNITY IN PALMA DE MALLORCA

*Unity • Culture • Progress*

# Congratulations!

**On behalf of the Yoruba Community in Palma de Mallorca,**
we felicitate with

## Mrs Bolanle Majekodunmi JP

as a participant of the **maiden Cohort 1** of the **Leadership Training** at the Migration Observatory Lab Center of African Studies University of Porto.

Also, we congratulate her as a recipient of the **2026 Global Diaspora Champion Award** under the ***"Small Business and Women Entrepreneurship"*** category being held at the University of Porto, Portugal.

We are proud of her achievements and this Award is a great opportunity for more strides to serve humanity.




*Once again, Congratulations!*

U. PORTO
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO



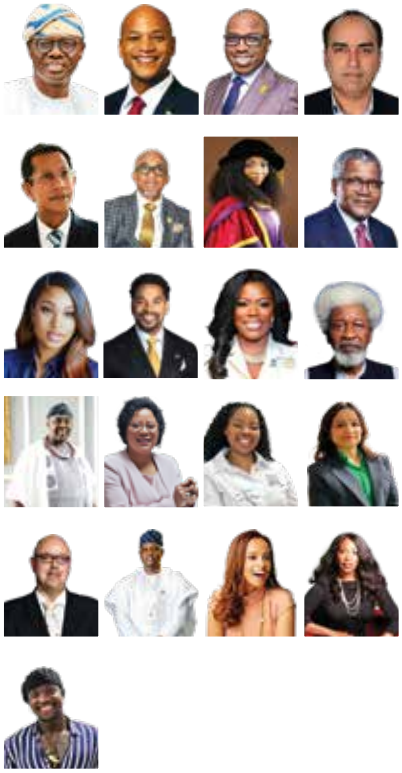
*Signed*

**Pastor Adekanmi Timothy Adewole**
Christian Fellowship Centre,
Palma de Mallorca, Spain

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# CONTENTS


**06**
GLOBAL DIASPORA CHAMPIONS AWARD 2026



**34** Giving Every Child a Fair Chance to Thrive



**47** OGWALOPO 2026: Owo Revives a Historic Cultural Tradition



**48** From Extraction to Transformation




**Diaspora Champions Magazine** is a premier platform honoring the accomplishments of diaspora leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and innovators. We share inspiring stories, promote cultural exchange, and inspire a new generation of global champions.




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# Editorial



# Connecting Diasporas; Building Futures

Welcome to the 3rd edition of Global Diaspora Champion Magazine chronicling the maiden Cohort of Leadership Training, Technical Tour and 3rd Global Diaspora Champion Awards 2026 - a historic convergence in Porto, Portugal.

Three ideas brought us here: "Connect. Build. Inspire"

## Connecting Diasporas

From Annapolis to Abuja, from Lisbon to Porto, we witnessed what was once thought impossible become protocol. The Governor's Commission on African Affairs, Maryland, chaired by Chukwunonso Vincent Iweanoge, signed a pact of collaboration with our Migration Observatory Lab. The National Judicial Institute of Nigeria joined hands with us to rethink migration laws and policy inputs - not as punitive instruments, but as tools for justice, dignity, and circular mobility. The Embassy of Nigeria in Lisbon opened its doors to the NJI Nigeria Delegation, affirming that diplomacy must follow its people. These are not ceremonial handshakes; they are institutional bridges.

## Building Futures

This edition documents our Technical Tour - from the classrooms of the University of Porto to the vision of African House Porto. Why an African House in Porto? Because Porto sits at the Atlantic edge where the old story of extraction ended and where the new story of transformation must begin.

As HRM Oba Omololu Afilaka argued in his keynote, "From Extraction to Transformation" the tragedy of irregular migration will not be ended by patrol boats. It will be ended by pathways. more legal pathways for the youth population.

This is the stand of the Migration Observatory Lab. By the Ima Gas Project - a field discovered in 1973 and left dormant for 53 years, now finally unlocked with $800 million - powering lithium beneficiation in Nasarawa and gold lapidary in Ilesa. By Dangote's proof that refining at home stabilises a currency and restores dignity. By our proposal: *One Million Virtual Miners* - young Nigerians in Zamfara and Sokoto earning in dollars, spending in naira, living at home, operating mines remotely for the world. No desert to cross. No Mediterranean graveyard. Broadband, not boat migration.

African House Porto will be the European hub for this future: a lab, a classroom, a cultural stage, a legal clinic for the Nigerian second generation in Spain and Portugal, and a studio for Go-Believe Productions to tell our stories beyond stereotypes.

## Inspiring Change Across Borders

The 3rd Global Diaspora Champion Awards honours those who refused to be defined by geography. Leaders who teach that leadership is not a title but a responsibility to translate pain into policy. Each citation in these pages represents a life that chose to build rather than to abandon.

This magazine therefore is not a souvenir. It is a blueprint. Inside, you will find:

- The full texts of our MOUs with Maryland and NJI Nigeria
- The Atorin Compact - four principles for deploying mining and energy capital to end irregular migration
- Portraits of our champions, technical tour insights, and the strategic roadmap for African House Porto 2026-202
- We are adding the Post Humous Award this year. Late Dr Kabir Usman who was former DG CMD Nigeria, he supported the Diaspora Engagement established in 2012 by offering for over seven years an office at the CMD Office in Lagos. He sadly passed on in December 2025.

We dedicate this edition to the young man in Edo who still contemplates paying a trafficker, and to the young woman in Zamfara who sees only dust where a refinery could be. May you open these pages and see a pathway home - and a pathway forward., a legal pathway to Posterity

The bridge is built. Now we must walk it together.

**Akinwale Roy Ojomo**
*Publisher/Managing Editor*



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# JAPA PROCESS 774 (MG)

## Leveraging Digital Solutions and Legal Pathways to Address Youth Irregular Migration in Nigeria




**CHALLENGE**

Irregular migration driven by youth unemployment, skills mismatch, and limited legal pathways.



High Unemployment



Information Gap



Irregular Routes

## PROJECT GOAL

Reduce youth irregular migration by expanding access to safe, legal, and dignified mobility pathways **across 774 LGAs.**

### PILLAR 1: JAPA Digital Platform

Verified Info · Skills Profiling · Migration Awarenees

### PILLAR 2 Legal Pathways

Study & Work Visas · Trainee Programs · Circular Migration

### PILLAR 3 Education & Skills Aligment

University Partnerships · TVET Training · Career Counseling

### PILLAR 4 Diaspora Engagement

Mentorship · Networking · Skills Transfer




## KEY PARTNERS



Embassies · Universities · TVET & Training Centers · Diaspora Groups

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**Bilateral Agreements btw** the Migration Lab Team, University of Porto, Portugal, and the Nigeria Immigration Service headquarters, Sauka-Abuja.

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Profile

# DR. EMEKA VITALIS OBI

**mni, FICD, FSM, FCPA, M.CIoD, MNIIA**

## Federal Permanent Secretary /Policy, Governance and Institutional Reform Leader Federal Civil Service Commission



Dr. Emeka Vitalis Obi is a distinguished Federal Permanent Secretary, Public-Sector Reformer and Strategic Policy Leader with more than two decades of dedicated service to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He is currently serving on special assignment in the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, working through the Special Duties Office to support service-wide priorities, institutional reform, performance improvement and high-level coordination.

A Dental Surgeon by training, Dr. Obi began his professional journey in the health sector before building a multidisciplinary career that now spans health administration, national development planning, public financial management, energy-sector governance, human-resource policy and Civil Service reform. He was appointed Federal Permanent Secretary on 28 June 2024 and sworn into office on 10 July 2024. His subsequent leadership assignments in the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and the Federal Civil Service Commission have given him an uncommon whole-of-government perspective and a strong record of translating policy into institutional action.

### SELECTED LEADERSHIP IMPACT

**National Development Planning and Social Policy**

At the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, Dr. Obi provided senior administrative and policy leadership for national planning, budget coordination, public financial management and development-partner engagement. His tenure supported the Federal Government-UNICEF 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria and the review of the 2025-2027 Social Policy Programme Work Plan, while advancing programme-based budgeting, evidence-led planning, inclusive development and intergovernmental learning under NG-CARES.

**Energy-Sector Governance and Strategic Coordination**

As Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, he inaugurated the Oil and Gas Sector Strategic Plan Development Committee to strengthen institutional coordination, accountability and measurable delivery across the value chain. He advanced engagement with the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department on climate policy, fiscal resilience and a transparent price-modulation framework; presented the Statistical Bulletin of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Sector 2018-2023; and championed investor engagement, monitoring and evaluation, enterprise content management, staff capacity development and a performance-driven workplace culture.

**Merit, Competence and Civil Service Renewal**

At the Federal Civil Service Commission, Dr. Obi promoted innovation, solution-oriented thinking, staff welfare and institutional confidence. He contributed to implementation planning for the Commission's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, the renewed emphasis on competency-based human-resource management, and measures to strengthen transparency, credibility and merit in directorate-level promotion through Computer-Based Testing. He also supported collaboration on reskilling, leadership development and better pre-retirement preparation for civil servants.

**Service-Wide Reform and Institutional Effectiveness**

In his current special assignment, he brings this cross-sector experience to the centre of the Federal Civil Service, supporting the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation in advancing performance management, human-capital development, inter-ministerial coordination, institutional effectiveness and citizen-centred service delivery.

### PROFESSIONAL STANDING AND LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Obi is an alumnus of the prestigious Senior Executive Course of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, and a Member of the National Institute (mni). His wider professional distinctions include FSM, FICD, FCPA, M.CIoD and MNIIA.

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MoL
MIGRATION OBSERVATORY LAB

CENTRO DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

DIASPORA INNOVATION INSTITUTE
Mobilizing Diaspora for Development




# Migration Observatory Lab
## Center of African Studies
UNIVERSITY OF PORTO | PORTUGAL

- Iberia Peninsula Project
- International Conference on Migration ICM
- Leadership Training
- Global Diaspora Champion Awards
- Migration, Diaspora Engagement and Global Skill Research



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aojomo@letras.up.pt
www.migrationlaboratory.com

*Research • Collaboration • Sustainable Impact*

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Profile

# Dr. Majid Aarabi

**Current Position:**
- Head of Academic Sceintific Programmes, Islamic Azad University, Yazd Branch, Iran
- Faculty Member, Department of Industrial Engineering, Islamic Azad University, Yazd Branch, Iran

**Education:**
- PhD in Industrial Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Johor, Malaysia
- MSc in Industrial Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Sharif University of Technology, Tehran, Iran
- BSc in Industrial Engineering, Computer Engineering, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

**Honours & Awards:**
- Top Ranked Graduate in Computer Engineering - Software, Islamic Azad University, South of Tehran Branch (1989), Tehran, Iran
- Ranked 4th among Industrial Engineering graduates, Sharif University of Technology, Tehran, Iran (2008)
- Top Technology Professor among universities of Yazd Province (2026)

**Research & Teaching Interests:**
- Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning in Industry
- Predictive Maintenance & Condition Monitoring
- Root Cause Analysis (RCA) & Failure Analysis • Industrial Automation & Smart Systems
- Operations Research & Optimisation
- Productivity Improvement & Organisational Excellence
- Soft Skills Development & Executive Coaching

**Academic & Professional Background:**
- Over 60 peer-reviewed publications in national and international journals and conferences
- Extensive experience in curriculum development and academic programmme leadership
- Active contributor to industry-academia collaboration projects
- Proven track record in designing and delivering training programmes on:
  - AI applications in maintenance and reliability
  - Root Cause Analysis (RCA) and problem-solving methodologies
  - Productivity improvement and operational excellence
  - Soft skills, leadership, and team effectiveness



**Executive Coaching & Organisational Development:**
- Certified and experienced coach for executive managers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Specialises in:
  - Strategic decision-making and change management
  - Leadership development and team dynamics
  - Enhancing organisational performance through AI-driven insights
  - Building high-performance cultures in industrial and service organisations

**Industrial & Entrepreneurial Activities:**
- Founder and Director of a technology company (Giti Gostaresh Isatis Co.) based at Yazd Science and Technology Park
- Specialising in: industrial automation, condition monitoring, predictive maintenance, smart systems, and AI-based optimization
- Strong connections with key industries: steel, mining, tile & ceramic, oil & gas, and petrochemical sectors
- Active consultant to SMEs on productivity improvement, AI adoption, and organisational transformation

**Training & Workshop Delivery:**
- Designed and delivered numerous workshops and executive programmes on:
  - AI for Maintenance and Reliability: Predictive maintenance, RCA, and failure analysis
  - Productivity & Organisational Excellence: Lean, Six Sigma, and process optimisation
  - Soft Skills for Engineers and Managers: Communication, Conflict management, leadership, and emotional intelligence
  - AI-Driven Decision Making: Data analytics and AI for business improvement

**International Collaboration:**
- Currently collaborating with Professor Adrian David Cheok (AM, FIET, FIEAust, FRSA) on:
  - AI-based predictive maintenance systems
  - Defence and security technology applications
  - Joint research and training programmes

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WhatsApp/Phone: **+98-9140903448**

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**IFESOWAPO S. COOPERATIVA**
FINANCE & INVESTMENT
Palma de Mallorca

# ¡Enhorabuena!

En nombre de Ifesowapo Cooperativa, felicitamos a

## Bolanle Majekodunmi

por su participación en la primera cohorte del programa de formación en liderazgo del **Migration Observatory Lab** (Laboratorio del Observatorio de Migraciones) del Centro de Estudios Africanos de la Universidad de Oporto.

Asimismo, la felicitamos por haber sido galardonada con el premio **Global Diaspora Champion Award 2026** (Premio a la Campeona de la Diáspora Global 2026), en la categoría de ***«Pequeñas empresas y emprendimiento femenino»***, en un acto celebrado en la Universidad de Oporto, Portugal.




Nos sentimos orgullosos de sus logros; este reconocimiento representa una excelente oportunidad para seguir avanzando en su labor al servicio de la humanidad.

**¡Una vez más, ¡enhorabuena!**

U. PORTO
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO



Firmado:
Chelita

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# Mohamed Azzim

## President of the Council Company Aga Khan Foundation Country Portugal



Mohamed Azzim is professor catedrático of Iscte, and president of the council of the Aga Khan Foundation in Portugal and Mozambique.

At Iscte he has served on the board and as dean of the Business School, as president of the Finance and Business Research Centers, director of the Doctoral Programs in Finance and Management, and co-director of the MBA programs in Africa.

He has also served the society at large as member, honorary secretary and chairman of the Aga Khan Economic Planning Board, chairman of the Aga Khan ITR Education Board, chairman of FinLIT, chairman of Focus Humanitarian Assistance Foundation, member of the external scientific review panel of the Foundation for Science and Technology, member of the steering committee of business school deans of the European Foundation for Management Development, and an invited member to the Global Compact of United Nations by secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon.

He obtained his doctorate from the triple-crown Henley Business School and conducted his postdoctoral studies as a Fulbright/U.S. State Department Scholar at Harvard University.

Professor Azzim has been invited to chair and speak at a range of conferences including the Asian Bankers Summit, the Economist and the Euromoney.

Mohamed Azzim has been a member of the Portuguese Diaspora Council since august 2017.

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# ALIKO DANGOTE

## Diaspora Champion Award - Honouree Profile

Aliko Dangote is a Nigerian industrialist, philanthropist and Africa's most prominent business leaders. He is the founder and president of the Dangote Group, a diversified conglomerate with major interests in cement, sugar, salt, fertiliser and petroleum refining.

Born on April 10, 1957, in Kano, Nigeria, Dangote built his business empire from a modest trading enterprise into one of Africa's largest industrial groups. His landmark investment in the Dangote Petroleum Refinery, one of the world's largest single-train refineries, represents a significant milestone in Africa's drive towards greater energy independence and industrial self-sufficiency.

Through the Dangote Foundation, he has also supported initiatives in healthcare, education, nutrition and poverty alleviation across Africa.

Aliko Dangote is recognised for his entrepreneurial vision, job creation and commitment to African industrial development. His achievements embody the spirit of the Diaspora Champion Award, celebrating individuals whose influence, enterprise and investments contribute to Africa's growth and global standing.

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# C. VINCENT IWEANOGE

## PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR
## Havit Inc. Washington, DC



C. Vincent Iweanoge, JD, is a successful American businessperson and Africa expert based in Washington, DC. He is the principal director of Havit Inc., a strategic advisory firm focused on investment, trade and business development in global emerging markets, with offices in the United States, Liberia and Nigeria.

Mr. Iweanoge is deeply engaged in and committed to strengthening United States-Africa commercial relations. Presently, he is working on development projects in Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mozambique, Botswana, Uganda and Zambia. Previously, he managed successful Africa development projects, including the reconstruction of roads totaling $11.2 million, as well as the redevelopment of an airport road totaling $116 million, both in Liberia. Both projects greatly improved mobility and quality of life for tens of thousands of citizens in western Africa. As principal director at Havit Inc., Mr. Iweanoge is also managing the consultancy's expansion into the energy and infrastructure sectors with the establishment of a new subsidiary, Havit Energy.

Mr. Iweanoge serves as the chairman of the Governor's Commission on African Affairs in Maryland, a position he has held since 2023. During his tenure, he has launched several initiatives including African Heritage Month. He also founded and chairs the Prince George's County African Diaspora Advisory Board.

Mr. Iweanoge's commitment to excellence is demonstrated by his membership in leading organizations, including the Maryland African Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Real Estate Managers and the Black Law Students Association.

Mr. Iweanoge has received several prestigious awards for his work, including the Leader Achievement Award from the Asian-African Chamber of Commerce, the African Living Legend Award from African Heritage, the African Diaspora Champion Award from the Diaspora Innovation Institute, the Leadership Honor Award from Impact Change, and the Global Influence Leadership Award.

Mr. Iweanoge holds a JD from the University of the District of Columbia, a master's degree in computer and information systems from Southeastern University, and a BS in real estate management from Enugu State University of Science and Technology in Nigeria.

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# The State of Maryland

Governor of the State of Maryland, to

**THE LEADERSHIP TRAINING TOURS AND AWARDS 2026** , Greetings:

**Be it Known:** *Because of your demonstration of high integrity and ability, meriting our great trust and respect, we are most pleased to award you the*

## *Governor's Citation*

*in appreciation of your outstanding services to the citizens of this State*

**Given** Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland, this 30th day of October Two Thousand and twenty-six

Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

Susan C. Lee
Secretary of State

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*Former Vice President Kamala Harris*



*President of Gambia*



*Congressman Darrell Issa, Vice chair Foreign relations*



*US Congressman Ronnie Jackson, subcommittee on Africa*



*US Senator Ted Cruz, chair subcommittee on Africa*



*President of Sierra Leone, Maada Bio*

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**Goodwill Message from Mr. Iweanoge**

My warmest congratulations to the Global Project Committee and the Center for African Studies at the University of Porto on the launch of African House Porto.

This is a commendable and forward-looking initiative that will provide a valuable space for innovation, research, and the celebration of African arts and culture. I am particularly encouraged by its vision of bringing people, knowledge and institutions together to strengthen Africa's engagement with its global diaspora and create opportunities for meaningful collaboration across borders.

I am deeply honoured to be associated with this important initiative and look forward to contributing, as a member of the Committee, to advancing its vision and bringing its aspirations to life. I am excited about the possibilities for partnership and the lasting impact we can collectively create.

I wish the Committee every success as it embarks on this inspiring journey of connecting diasporas, building futures and inspiring change across borders.

Signed,
**C. Vincent Iweanoge**
***Chair, Governor's Commission on African Affairs***






C. Vincent Iweanoge, JD
(Principal Director/CEO)

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Investment & Trade Promotion
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## C. VINCENT IWEANOGE

Principal Director

C. Vincent Iweanoge holds a Juris Doctor Degree in Law from David A. Clarke School of Law, University of District of Columbia. Prior to getting into the legal realm, he was in the real estate investment market.

He helped a lot of investors acquire prime real estate in the Washington D.C. Metro Area, especially commercial real estate. He was also instrumental in bringing multinationals and multi-million dollar companies to West Africa.

## ABOUT US

Havit is a leading U.S. based project development, marketing consulting and transaction advisory firm; which specializes in helping enterprises create sustainable growth through successful expansion into international markets.

## OUR MISSION & VISION

**OUR MISSION:** to leverage our relationship with institutional lenders to bridge the Africa funding gap.

**OUR VISION:** to be the number one business development, financing and investment company.

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# PROF. OGECHI ADEOLA

**Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Innovation & Enterprise | Professor of Marketing | University of Kigali, Rwanda**

Professor Ogechi Adeola is an accomplished academic, executive leader, researcher, author and board director whose career spans higher education, banking, consulting and international development. She is currently Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Innovation & Enterprise and Professor of Marketing at the University of Kigali, Rwanda, where she provides strategic leadership for research, innovation, enterprise development and institutional partnerships.



Before entering academia, Professor Adeola built a 14-year career in the financial services sector, including experience with Citibank Nigeria, before transitioning into higher education. She later held academic and leadership roles at Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University, Nigeria, and has since developed an international academic career spanning Africa and beyond. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Torrens University Australia and serves on the Business Administration Advisory Board of the University of the People.

A prolific scholar, Professor Adeola has produced more than 150 scholarly and professional outputs, including journal articles, books, book chapters, teaching cases, policy reports and practitioner publications. Her interdisciplinary research spans marketing strategy, entrepreneurship, digital transformation and artificial intelligence, gender and inclusion, sustainability, tourism and hospitality, indigenous African enterprise, and the creative economy. Her books and scholarship have contributed to advancing African perspectives in global academic and policy conversations, particularly through her work on Igba-Boi and indigenous African enterprise, as well as Africa's creative industries.

Her scholarly and leadership impact has received significant international recognition. She was named among the world's top 2% of scientists in the Stanford-Elsevier global ranking in 2025. In the AD Scientific Index 2025, she was ranked No. 1 in Nigeria in Marketing and among Africa's top six scientists in Marketing. In the AD Scientific Index 2026, she was ranked No. 1 in Rwanda in Business and Management and among the Top 10 Scientists in Rwanda. Her other distinctions include the Outstanding Leadership Award (2026) from the African Association of Deans of Student Affairs in Tertiary Institutions; recognition among the 50 Most Influential Educators in Global Hospitality and Travel (2024) by the International Hospitality Institute; the Most Influential Women 2024 - Sustainability Award from the World Association for Sustainable Development; and an Emerald Literati Award for Outstanding Paper (2022). She also serves as the Global Representative for Africa (2025-2028) of the Strategic Management Division of the Academy of Management, reflecting her wider contribution to African scholarship and international academic engagement.

Beyond academia, Professor Adeola contributes to corporate governance, policy and enterprise development through board and advisory roles. She serves as an Independent Non-Executive Director of Cornerstone Insurance Plc, a Non-Executive Director of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Business Incubation Platform, and Trade Advisor to the Nigerian-British Chamber of Commerce (NBCC). She is also a Consultant to the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) on the African Sub-Sovereign Governments Network (AfSNET) and previously served as National Consultant to the International Labour Organization (ILO) on Women's Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria (2022).

A lawyer by training, Professor Adeola holds a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) and an MBA from Alliance Manchester Business School, United Kingdom, as well as an LLB from the University of Nigeria and the BL from the Nigerian Law School.

Across her work, Professor Adeola is committed to advancing African scholarship, responsible innovation, entrepreneurship, inclusive leadership and sustainable development, while building stronger connections between Africa, its global diaspora and the wider international community.

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# Bolanle Majekodunmi

Bolanle Majekodunmi is a Nigerian-born business tycoon and immigrant entrepreneur based in Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

With over 15 years of entrepreneurial experience, she has been at the forefront of reviving and promoting authentic African food and indigenous products to both African and non-African communities across Spain. Through her business, she has successfully bridged cultures by introducing the rich taste of Africa to the European market, creating a thriving community around African cuisine and culture.

Her impact and leadership as an immigrant entrepreneur earned her a prestigious nomination in November 2025 to represent Spain at FIcampus 2025 in Belgium as an exemplary immigrant entrepreneur.

Bolanle continues to be a powerful voice for African entrepreneurship, cultural integration, and economic empowerment in the diaspora.

She recently participated in the Adire Day and Festival held in Sevilla, Spain as hosted by the Yoruba Association of Sevilla, Spain

Also, she has been nominated for the Global Diaspora Champion Awards 2026 under the Migrants Entrepreneurship Category scheduled for the University of Porto Portugal.



***Bolanle with other Migrants Entrepreneurs in Belgium***

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*Bolanle and Governor at the event*





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# Hon. Wes Moore

## Governor of Maryland

Wes Moore is the 63rd Governor of Maryland and the state's first Black governor. His administration has placed strong emphasis on expanding economic opportunity, education, workforce development and community investment for Black Marylanders.

Governor Moore has also made engagement with Maryland's growing African immigrant and diaspora communities a significant part of his administration. His government established the Governor's Commission on African Affairs, creating a formal channel for African communities to advise state government on economic, workforce, business, educational and civic issues.

In 2024, Moore proclaimed September as African Immigrant Heritage Month in Maryland, recognizing the cultural, social and economic contributions of African immigrants and highlighting their role in Maryland's future. In 2026, his administration also established a statewide Immigrant Rights Protection Task Force to address fraud, exploitation and barriers facing immigrant Marylanders.

Through initiatives supporting Black-owned businesses, education, HBCUs, employment and safer communities, Moore's administration has sought to expand opportunities for Black communities while strengthening Maryland's connection with the wider African diaspora.



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# ADIRE DAY AND FESTIVAL 2026, SEVILLA, SPAIN






*Dr Adeola Adeleye-Fashubaa presenting an Adire to Ambassador Victor Ikpeazu during the Adire Day while Akinwale Roy Ojomo watched with admiration*



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*Colourful Adire Day and Festival 2026, Sevilla, Spain.*




*Cutting of Independence Day cake during the Adire Day. Ambassador Victor Ikpeazu being joined by other dignitaries*



*Adire Day and Festival 2026, Sevilla, Spain.*




*The Ambassador with Leaders of Cultural organisations in Spain at the Fire Day and Festival 2026*



*Akinwale Roy Ojomo, Guest Speaker at Adire Day and Ambassador Victor Ikpeazu during the Adire Day 2026*

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## FEATURED SPEAKERS



**MIKE MGBAME**
Co-Founder,
Data Analytics Consultant
Hankali Analytics



**PROFESSOR AKINWALE ROY OJOMO**
**HOST & SPEAKER**
Founder, Migration Observatory Lab
Lead Researcher, Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto



**TIJANI OLATUNJI**
Founder & CEO
OneMAI



**SPEAKER 4**
Name & Role



**GREAT OGWU**
Cybersecurity Expert
Experis Lda

**THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2026**
**9:00 AM - 2:00 PM**

**IN-PERSON & ONLINE**
**HUMANITIES LAB, FLUP**
Faculty of Arts and Humanities,
University of Porto
*Venue subject to final confirmation*

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*Open Project Alicante, Spain August 27-30, 2026*





*The band in Caceres, Spain*





*UNGA 2026 HE Bianca Odumegu-Ojukwu Nigerian Foreign Affairs and Minister Brunner Magnus of the European Union Migration Affairs in New York*









*Clevenard delegate from South Africa and Portugal*

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# HON. WILL JAWANDO

Will Jawando is an at-large member and former Vice President of the Montgomery County Council, with a record of advocacy focused on education, economic opportunity, housing and racial equity. The son of a Nigerian immigrant, Jawando has brought a strong African-diaspora perspective to public service, helping strengthen the connection between Montgomery County government and its growing African immigrant communities.

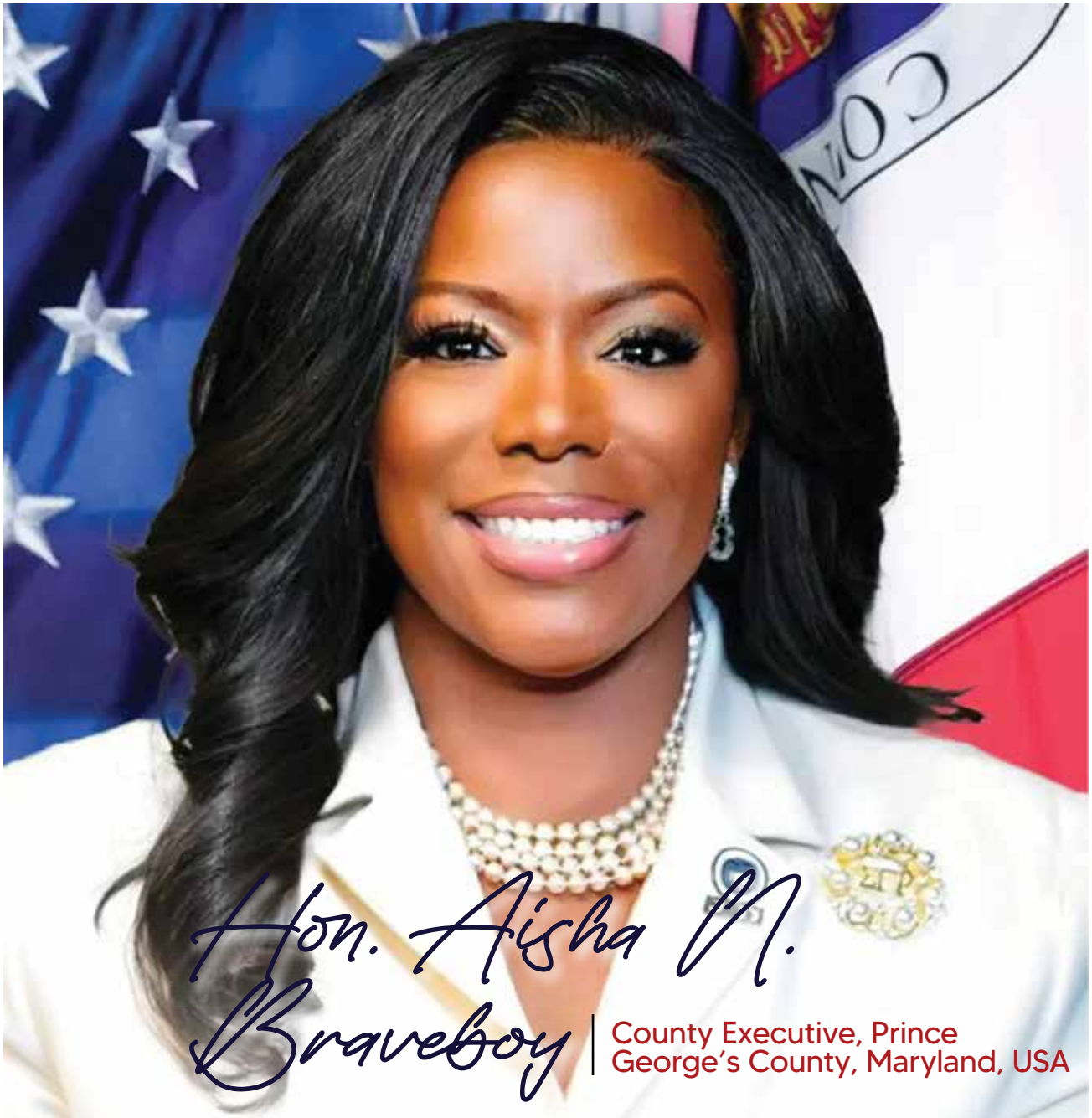
He co-founded the African Immigrant Caucus, an initiative created to increase civic engagement, economic development and political participation among African immigrants across ethnic, national and cultural lines.

Jawando has also championed initiatives aimed at expanding opportunity for Black communities, including efforts to close educational achievement gaps, support young people, address the racial wealth gap and improve housing affordability. As chair of the Council's Education & Culture Committee, he has continued to focus on quality education and opportunity for all students.

As a Nigerian-American, Jawando has consistently highlighted African heritage as an important part of Montgomery County's identity. He has helped lead the Council's African Heritage Month celebrations, recognizing the contributions of African immigrants and their role in shaping the county's social, cultural and economic future.

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# Hon. Aisha N. Braveboy

## County Executive, Prince George's County, Maryland, USA

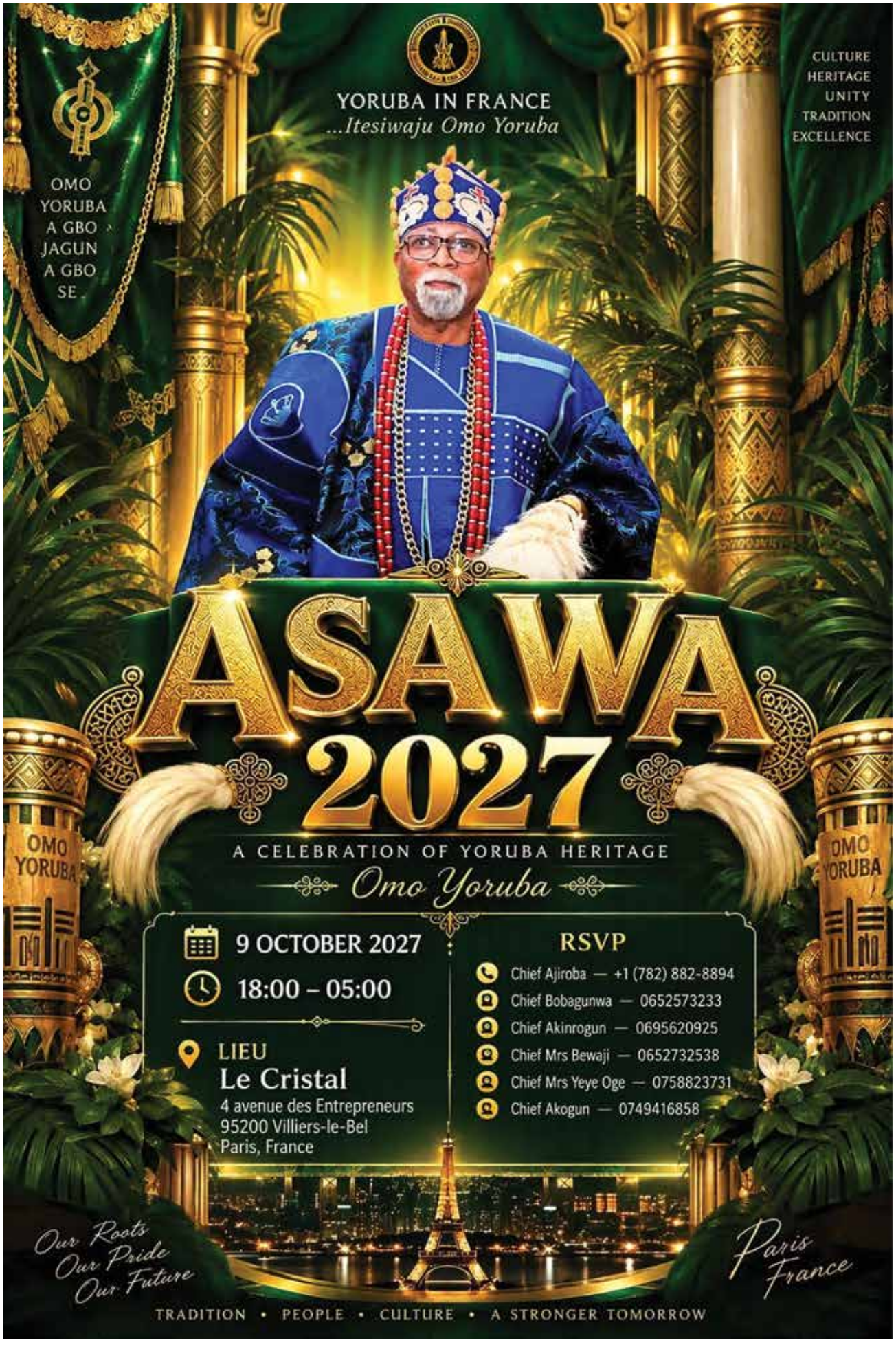
Hon. Aisha N. Braveboy is a lawyer, public servant and the County Executive of Prince George's County, Maryland, having assumed office in June 2025. A lifelong public servant, she has built her career around justice, community development, economic empowerment and expanding opportunities for underserved populations.

As a former chair of the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, Braveboy championed policies promoting educational opportunity, reducing mass incarceration and expanding opportunities for women- and minority-owned businesses. Her work in criminal justice also included initiatives to support survivors of domestic violence, address hate crimes and provide rehabilitation and employment pathways for young people returning from incarceration.

As County Executive, she has prioritised job creation, small-business development, youth investment and inclusive economic growth. Her administration has also promoted multicultural engagement, including the county's annual Multicultural Festival, which celebrates the diverse cultures and contributions of its residents, including African immigrants and diaspora communities.

Through her public service, Braveboy continues to advance initiatives aimed at strengthening Black communities, broadening economic participation and building a more inclusive future for the diverse population of Prince George's County.

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# HRM Oba Omololu Ibitoye Afilaka

## Alatorin of Atorin-Ijesa, Osun State, Nigeria

HRM Oba Omololu Ibitoye Afilaka is the traditional ruler of Atorin-Ijesa in Atakunmosa East Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria, and a prominent voice for community development, responsible resource management and the preservation of Ijesa heritage.

A systems engineer by profession, Oba Afilaka brings a blend of technological expertise, traditional leadership and community-focused development to his role as Alatorin. His leadership vision is centred on building a peaceful, progressive and economically vibrant community while creating opportunities for its people.

Atorin-Ijesa is situated in a region endowed with significant mineral resources. Oba Afilaka has advocated for responsible mining and sustainable community development, with emphasis on ensuring that natural resources contribute meaningfully to the wellbeing and advancement of host communities.

His development priorities include improving infrastructure, expanding access to education and basic amenities, strengthening economic opportunities and opening Atorin to greater investment and partnerships. He has consistently highlighted the strategic importance of the community within the wider Ijesa region and its potential for sustainable economic growth.

Beyond traditional leadership, Oba Afilaka has demonstrated an interest in governance, social development and academic research. His work and public engagements reflect a broader commitment to addressing issues affecting communities and contributing to conversations around development and social transformation.

He is also an advocate for the preservation and promotion of Yoruba and Ijesa cultural heritage, recognising the importance of connecting younger generations and the global African diaspora to their cultural roots.

In 2024, the Osun State Government approved his restoration as Alatorin of Atorin, and in May 2026, he was formally presented with the Staff of Office and Instrument of Appointment, marking an important milestone in his traditional leadership.

As Alatorin, Oba Afilaka continues to champion unity, development and responsible leadership, with a vision of positioning Atorin-Ijesa as a community capable of attracting investment, empowering its people and preserving its heritage for generations to come.

His story reflects the enduring role of traditional institutions in contemporary Africa - bridging heritage and modernity, local development and global engagement, and cultural identity and economic opportunity.

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Profile

# Professor Wole Soyinka

## Nobel Laureate • Playwright • Poet • Author • Human Rights Advocate

Professor Wole Soyinka is one of Africa's most influential literary and intellectual figures and the first African to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, which he was awarded in 1986 for his body of dramatic and literary work.

Born on 13 July 1934 in Abeokuta, Nigeria, Soyinka studied at the University College Ibadan and the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. He subsequently established himself as a playwright, poet, novelist, essayist, actor and scholar whose work has addressed political oppression, social injustice, corruption, human dignity and the complexities of African identity.

Beyond literature, Soyinka has been a prominent advocate for democracy, freedom of expression, human rights and accountable governance. His opposition to authoritarian rule in Nigeria has, at various points, resulted in imprisonment, exile and personal risk. During the Nigerian Civil War, he was detained for approximately 22 months after attempting to mediate between the Federal Government and Biafran leadership.

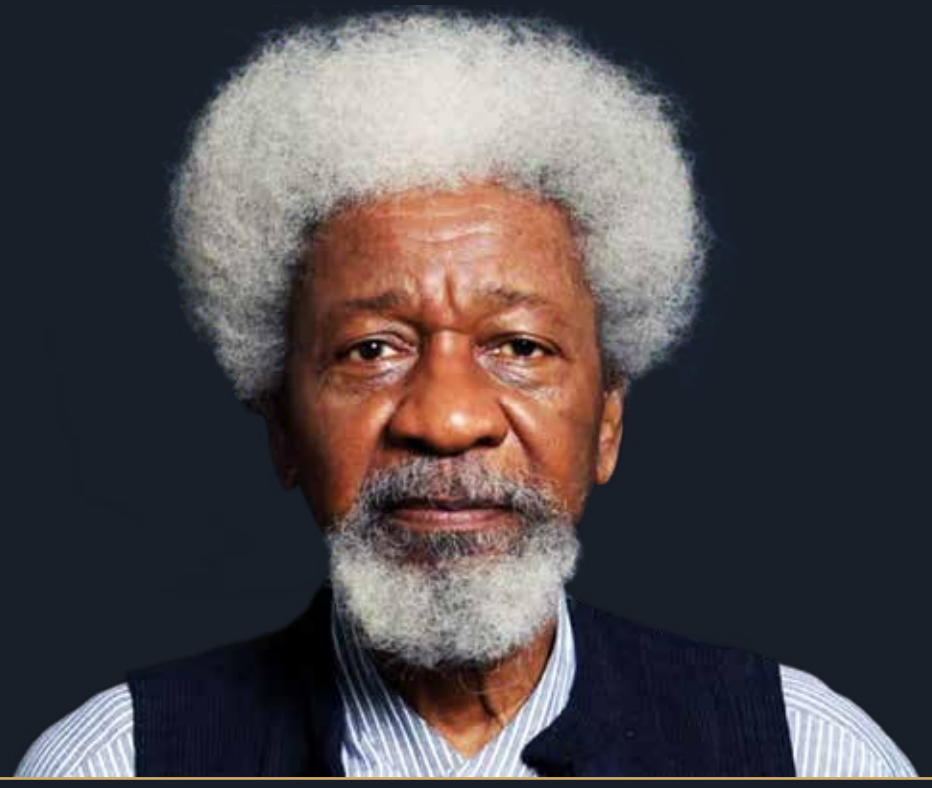
His literary works include The Lion and the Jewel, A Dance of the Forests, The Trials of Brother Jero, Kongi's Harvest, Death and the King's Horseman and The Man Died, among many others. His writings have earned international recognition for combining African cultural traditions with universal questions about power, justice, morality and freedom.

Soyinka has also held distinguished academic positions and has taught at universities in Nigeria, the United States and the United Kingdom. His intellectual influence extends well beyond the literary world, making him an important voice in conversations about Africa's political, cultural and social future.

His Nobel Prize recognition placed African literature firmly on the global cultural stage and established Soyinka as an enduring representative of Africa's intellectual and creative power.

For generations of Africans and members of the African diaspora, Wole Soyinka's life and work have demonstrated the power of literature, intellectual courage and cultural identity to influence societies and challenge injustice.

At more than nine decades of life, Professor Wole Soyinka remains a towering figure in global literature and one of Nigeria's most internationally recognised cultural ambassadors.



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# Daughters of Zion

Isaiah 52:1-2

# Congratulations

On behalf of Daughters of Zion,
we congratulate

## Mrs Bolanle Majekodunmi JP

as an Awardee and participant of the
**maiden Cohort 1 of the Leadership Training**
at the Migration Observatory Lab
Center of African Studies
University of Porto

Also, her nomination of thle
**2026 GLOBAL DIASPORA CHAMPION AWARD**
under the "Small Business and Women Entrepreneurship' category

Date:
October 30,2026

Venue:
University of Porto, Portugal

*We are proud of her achievements and continuous service to humanity.*

**Congratulations**

*Signed*
Members and Executive of Daughters of Zion

U. PORTO

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# GIVING EVERY CHILD A FAIR CHANCE TO THRIVE




CharaKids Foundation is a child-focused nonprofit organisation committed to creating better life opportunities for underserved children in Nigeria. Based primarily in Akure, Ondo State, the Foundation works to break cycles of disadvantage by addressing some of the most fundamental barriers children face: hunger, poor access to healthcare, limited educational opportunities and inadequate developmental support.

For over five years, CharaKids Foundation has translated compassion into practical action, reaching children and communities through targeted programmes, outreach projects and strategic partnerships.

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- 5+ Years of Service and Impact
- 1,200+ Children Reached
- 21+ Projects Completed
- 
- 11 Partnerships built to advance the mission

## WHAT WE DO

### Nourish

Through the Kids Care Initiative, CharaKids provides food and nutritional support to underserved children, recognising that proper nutrition is fundamental to healthy growth and development.

### Care

The Foundation supports children's health and well-being, working to bridge the gap between poverty and every child's fundamental right to a healthier future.

### Educate

Through the Kids Scholar Initiative, CharaKids addresses barriers to education and helps create pathways for children whose opportunities are restricted by economic hardship.

### Empower

Through the Kids Empowerment Initiative, children gain practical skills, knowledge and confidence through mentorship, vocational training and skill-building programmes designed to prepare them for an evolving world.

## IMPACT WITH PURPOSE

CharaKids Foundation's work is anchored in three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

SDG 2 - Zero Hunger

SDG 3 - Good Health & Well-being

SDG 4 - Quality Education

Its approach goes beyond meeting immediate needs. The Foundation is building pathways through which children can be fed, healthy, educated and empowered, with the support and resources they need to thrive regardless of their background.

FED ● HEALTHY ● EDUCATED ● EMPOWERED

**Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.**

*charakidsfoundation.org | @charakidsfoundation*

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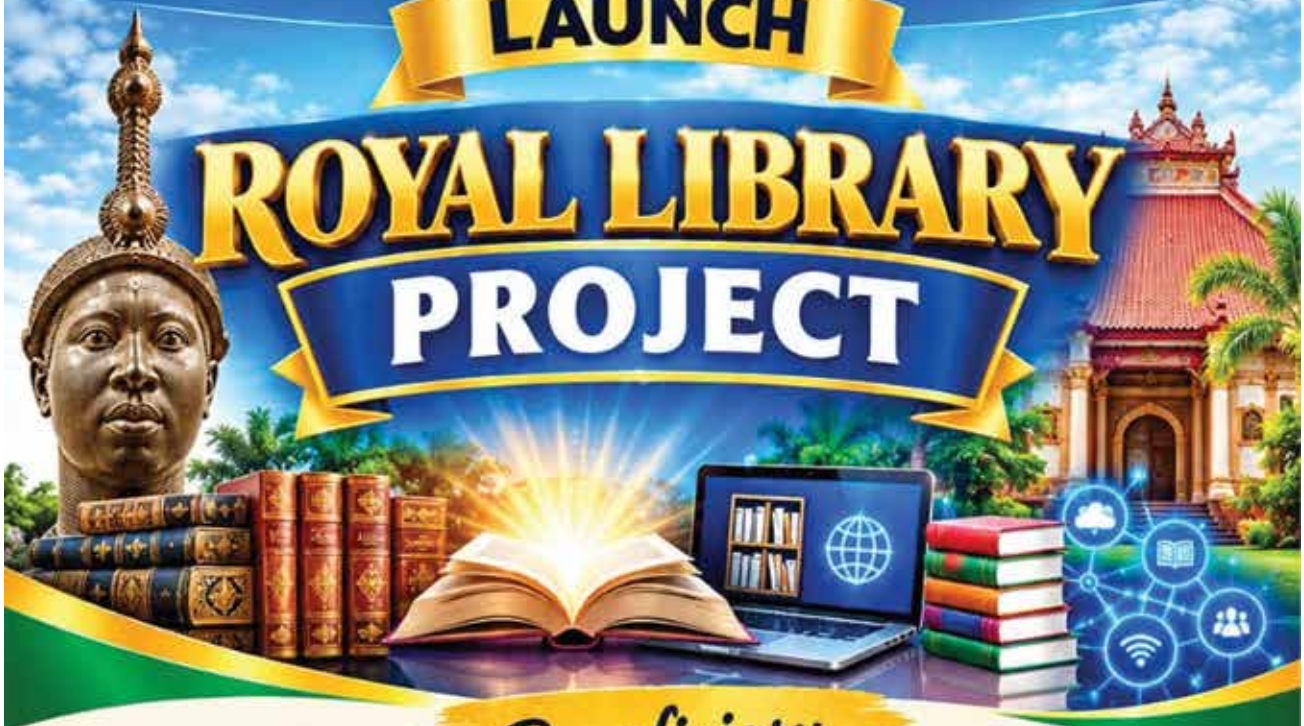
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***RLP*** ... *a collaboration project and initiative of*
**Nigeria Connect, Diaspora Innovation Institute** and **Center of African Studies University of Porto Portugal**

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# Rupa Singh

## Founder & CEO, AI-Beehive, India

Rupa Singh is an Indian technology entrepreneur, AI ethicist, author and global advisor specialising in Artificial Intelligence governance, ethics and responsible AI. She is the Founder and CEO of AI-Beehive, an organisation focused on helping businesses and professionals understand and implement responsible and human-centred AI.

A TEDx speaker and international thought leader, Rupa has addressed more than 150 national and international forums, including the BRICS AI Ethics Forum, Columbia University and Dell Technologies' Experience Design Summit. She also serves in advisory and professional roles within international AI and ethics initiatives.

Her academic background includes a Master's degree in Artificial Intelligence from Liverpool John Moores University, alongside specialised training in deep learning. She is also the author of books on AI ethics, including AI Ethics with a Buddhist Perspective and Operationalizing AI Ethics: From Principles to Practices.

Rupa's work is driven by a central mission: ensuring that advances in artificial intelligence remain grounded in human dignity, inclusion, accountability and responsible innovation. She has been recognised by the Global AI Ethics community among its leading voices and contributes to international conversations on the future governance of AI.

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# BhasweLihle "Lihle" Zilwa

**Founder | Author | African Continent Award Winner | International Speaker**

BhasweLihle "Lihle" Zilwa is an 18-year-old South African youth empowerment advocate, author, entrepreneur and international speaker on a mission to inspire 100,000 teenagers across Africa to believe in themselves, pursue excellence and turn their dreams into action.

Lihle's passion for empowering young people began at an early age. At just nine years old, she initiated a community project that benefited 594 learners through the donation of school uniforms and educational materials. In 2021, at the age of 13, she founded the Future Global Leaders Club NPC, which motivates high school learners achieving an average of 70% and above to sustain academic excellence, pursue greatness and realise their potential.

At 14, Lihle authored and published Lihle's Collection of Motivational Quotes for Teens, a book containing more than 300 motivational and inspirational quotes, together with BhasweLihle Zilwa's Guide to Navigating Success. Recognising the importance of accessibility and inclusion, the book is available in English, French and Kiswahili, as well as Braille.

Her contribution to youth empowerment earned her two prestigious African Continent awards in 2025: Youth Empowerment Champion of the Year and NextGen Innovator of the Year. She regards these achievements not merely as recognition, but as a responsibility to extend her impact and inspire other young people.

Although admitted to the University of the Witwatersrand to study Biomedical Sciences after completing Grade 12 in 2025, Lihle made the deliberate decision to pause her studies and dedicate her 18th year to her mission of empowering teenagers. Through the #Lihle100kTeensChallenge, she is working to inject self-belief and ignite the dreams of 100,000 teenagers across Africa.

Her initiatives include school visits, motivational engagements, large-scale Teens Self-Belief Conferences and digital outreach. Her motivational content has attracted more than 822,000 views, while her school visits and conferences have reached almost twenty thousands of learners. In August 2026, she made her international speaking debut at the Clevenard Open Project in Alicante, Spain, presenting on "From Self-Belief to Action:

How Teenagers Can Turn Their Dreams into Action."

Lihle's message is both simple and transformative: young people's backgrounds and circumstances need not determine their futures. Through self-belief, hard work, perseverance and a commitment to excellence, teenagers can develop the confidence and discipline to pursue their aspirations.

Her vision is to build a Self-Belief generation of confident, purpose-driven and empowered young Africans who recognise their potential and have the courage to turn their dreams into reality. It is her dream that she can contribute to the Aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063 which is counting on empowered and engaged youth.

www.bhaswelihlezilwa.co.za

www.futuregloballeadersclub.co.za



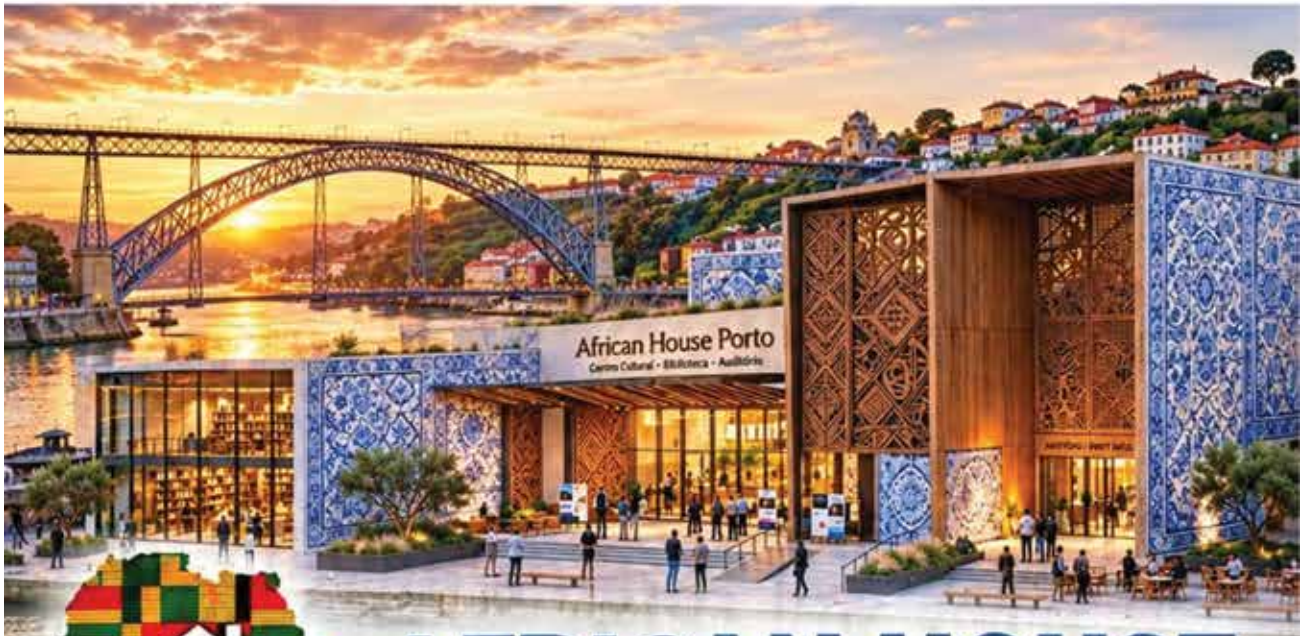
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# Jorge Sebastião

## *Co-Founder, EcoX*

Jorge Sebastião is a seasoned technology executive, cybersecurity specialist, adviser and international speaker with more than three decades of experience in Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

He is Co-Founder of EcoX, a Dubai-based business and technology ecosystem focused on connecting entrepreneurs, investors, innovators and technology leaders. He is also Co-Founder of the Global Blockchain Organization (GBO).

Sebastião has extensive expertise spanning blockchain, DeFi, asset tokenisation, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, IoT, 5G, cloud computing, big data, disaster recovery and managed services.

Before his entrepreneurial and advisory work, he served as CTO Eco-System at Huawei Technologies in the United Arab Emirates, where he was involved in technology architecture, innovation and digital transformation. He has also advised innovative technology startups and participated in international forums on emerging technologies.

A recognised international speaker, Sebastião has addressed audiences on blockchain, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing and other technologies shaping the digital economy. He is also credited with creating the A6 security framework, a structured approach to cybersecurity covering assessment, architecture, application, administration, awareness and agility.

Through EcoX and his wider work in technology and innovation, Jorge Sebastião continues to contribute to the development of global technology ecosystems, entrepreneurship and the adoption of emerging technologies.



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# Ola' Awakan



Ola' Awakan, is a multiple award-winning broadcast journalist, dramatist, poet, and storyteller whose works cut across media, tourism and theatre. He was appointed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (GCFR) as the Director-General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority (NTDA), effective September 2, 2025, for an initial term of four years.

Before his appointment, he was honoured with the Custodian of Culture Award by LEAD City University. As a broadcast journalist with TVC News, he won the 2022 Nigeria Media Merit Award (NMMA) for TV Production of the Year and received an Honourable Mention at the 2023 Diamond Awards for Media Excellence. In 2021, he was named among the recipients of the Royal African Awards by His Imperial Majesty, the Ooni of Ife, Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi. Dr. Awakan was also a two-time winner of the Trek Africa TV Reporter of the Year Award (2019, 2020), alongside several other recognitions for his impactful special reports and documentaries.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mass Communication from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State, and a Master's Degree from the University of Lagos, as well as a Certificate in Community Journalism from RUDN University, Russia. He combines media expertise with creative insight, bringing a dynamic perspective to leadership at NTDA. His approach is rooted in innovation, collaboration, and a strong belief in the power of tourism and culture as drivers of national unity and economic growth.

Beyond the newsroom, Dr. Awakan's passion for storytelling extends to literature and theatre. His play Echoes of the Drums (2005) won a prize at the maiden Beeta Playwright Competition (2015) and was later staged by the National Troupe of Nigeria to mark Nigeria's 62nd Independence Anniversary. His other plays include Tafawa Balewa, Behind the Map, Time Up, Blind Stab, White Charcoal, Jagabanism, Crawling Speed, Lodavence, The Madness that Cures My Land, The Legend of Oronna, and Crows of the Dawn, and The Scheme (a duology on NYSC), among others. He is also the author of "Eko Poems: An Anthology of Nursery Rhymes", and has his poetry featured in PEN Nigeria's Anthology of Shadows and Rainbows (edited by Olu Obafemi and Folu Agoi) and Five Hundred Nigerian Poets (compiled by Prof. Jerry Agada).

Dr. Olayiwola Awakan is determined to use his wealth of knowledge, creativity and network to transform the tourism sector in Nigeria through strategic partnerships, leveraging technology, and strengthening Nigeria's global tourism presence in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of the present administration.

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# Semhar Araia

## Founder & CEO, The Diaspora Academy, USA



Semhar Araia is a lawyer, strategist, diaspora specialist and internationally recognised leader in diaspora engagement and global development. She is the Founder and CEO of The Diaspora Academy, a diaspora advisory firm and leadership institute that equips diaspora leaders and advises institutions seeking to engage diaspora communities effectively.

With more than two decades of experience, Araia has worked at the intersection of diaspora engagement, African affairs, public policy, international development, philanthropy and leadership. She has advised governments, international organisations, foundations, businesses, non-profits and diaspora communities around the world.

Before establishing The Diaspora Academy, Araia created and led Diaspora Public Policy at Meta for its Africa, Middle East and Turkey Public Policy team. She also led diaspora partnerships at UNICEF USA, developing philanthropic partnerships with diaspora organisations in the United States. Earlier in her career, she served as a public policy adviser at Oxfam International, worked on Capitol Hill in the U.S. House of Representatives, and served with The Elders, the organisation founded by Nelson Mandela.

A lawyer by training, Araia began her career as an attorney involved in the implementation of the 2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia peace agreement. She has subsequently contributed her expertise to major international institutions, including the African Union, United Nations, IOM and USAID.

Her leadership has earned significant recognition. She was named a White House Champion of Change during the Obama administration, received the African Union Diaspora Awardee of the Year honour, and has been recognised among MIPAD's Top 100 Most Influential People of African Descent, The Root's Top 100 and OkayAfrica's Top 100 Women. She was also featured in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture's Next-Generation Voices exhibit.

Araia previously founded and led the Diaspora African Women's Network (DAWN), which worked to develop and support African diaspora women focused on African affairs across multiple countries and continents.

Born in New York City to Eritrean immigrant parents, Semhar Araia is based in Washington, D.C. Her work continues to focus on helping diaspora communities transform their time, talent, networks and resources into meaningful contributions to development and global impact.

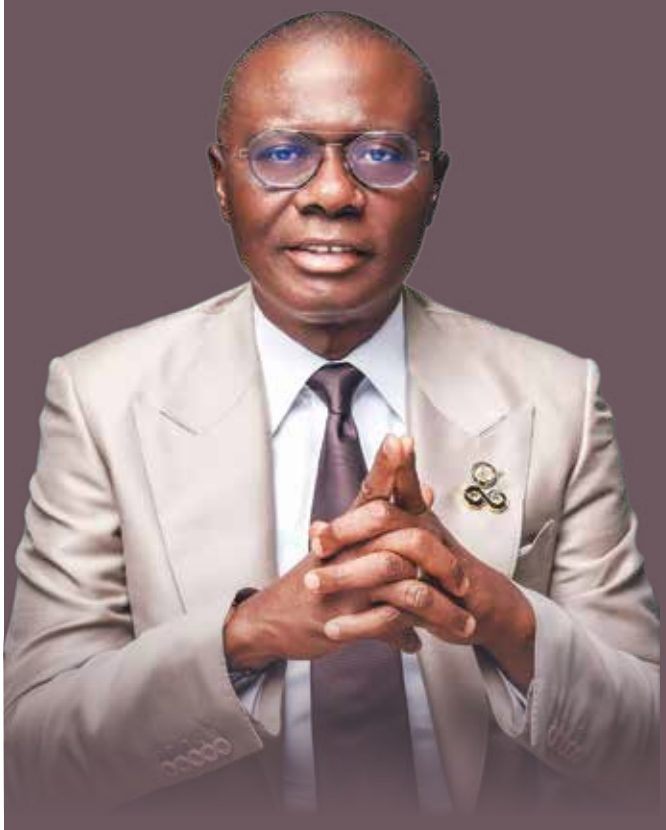
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# BABAJIDE OLUSOLA SANWO-OLU

**Executive Governor of Lagos State, Nigeria**

**Public Administration | Economic Development**
**Global Investment and Diaspora Engagement**



Mr. Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu is a Nigerian public administrator and politician serving as the 15th Governor of Lagos State. Born on 25 June 1965 in Lagos, he combines a background in banking and business management with extensive experience in public administration, economic planning and institutional development. He assumed office as governor on 29 May 2019 and was re-elected in 2023.

A graduate of the University of Lagos, Sanwo-Olu holds a degree in Surveying and Geo-Informatics and a Master of Business Administration in Management. His executive education includes programmes at Lagos Business School, London Business School and Harvard Kennedy School. Before becoming governor, he held senior positions in Nigeria's banking sector, including roles at Lead Merchant Bank, United Bank for Africa and First City Monument Bank.

His public service career began in Lagos State government in 2003. He subsequently served as Commissioner for Economic Planning and Budget, Commissioner for Commerce and Industry, and Commissioner for Establishments, Training and Pensions. In 2016, he became Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Lagos State Development and Property Corporation, gaining experience in public-sector management, housing and institutional performance.

## Positioning Lagos for Global Investment

As governor, Sanwo-Olu has pursued an economic development agenda organised around the T.H.E.M.E.S. framework, subsequently expanded to T.H.E.M.E.S.+. Its priorities include transportation and traffic management, healthcare and the environment, education and technology, economic development, security and governance, and social inclusion.

His administration has placed considerable emphasis on infrastructure, transportation, digital innovation and investment partnerships intended to strengthen Lagos's position as a major commercial centre in Africa. Projects and initiatives associated with this wider development strategy include the Lagos Blue and Red rail lines, the Lekki economic corridor, technology-driven enterprise development and efforts to improve the state's investment environment.

In September 2025, Sanwo-Olu promoted Lagos—Georgia cooperation during the US—Nigeria Policy and Trade Forum in Atlanta, highlighting opportunities for collaboration in infrastructure, healthcare, education, technology and the creative industries. He also encouraged Nigerians in the United States to contribute through investment, mentoring and professional partnerships. These engagements reflect the state's efforts to develop international relationships that can support economic growth and knowledge exchange.

## Building Stronger Connections with the Diaspora

Diaspora engagement has become an identifiable component of Lagos State's international outreach. The Office of the Senior Special Assistant on Diaspora and Foreign Relations was established in June 2019 to support diaspora relations, diplomatic engagement, investment facilitation and the integration of returnees.

The Lagos State Diaspora Agency also works to connect Lagosians abroad with opportunities at home, including business, tourism, mentoring, volunteering and community development. Its wider mandate encompasses engagement with Nigerians living overseas and people of African descent seeking to reconnect with their ancestral

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heritage.

In April 2025, the Lagos State Residents Registration Agency and the Lagos State Diaspora Agency announced a collaboration to document Lagos indigenes and residents living abroad. The initiative aims to improve diaspora data, strengthen participation in state programmes and help government understand the needs and contributions of Lagos's global community.

The state has also promoted Lagos as a destination for people of African descent seeking to explore their heritage. In engagements with an African Ancestry delegation, Sanwo-Olu encouraged visitors tracing their Nigerian roots to consider Lagos a home for cultural reconnection. The proposed permanent Door of Return in Badagry is another initiative intended to strengthen heritage tourism and the historical relationship between Africa and its diaspora.

### Infrastructure, Innovation and Economic Opportunity

Lagos's economic importance makes its relationship with the diaspora particularly significant. As Nigeria's principal commercial centre, the state offers opportunities across finance, technology, logistics, real estate, healthcare, entertainment, tourism and manufacturing.

> *"As Nigeria's principal commercial centre, the state offers opportunities across finance, technology, logistics, real estate, healthcare, entertainment, tourism and manufacturing."*

Sanwo-Olu's administration has pursued international investment partnerships and infrastructure development to improve the environment in which businesses operate. The proposed Lagos International Financial Centre, transport infrastructure and investments along the Lekki corridor form part of a broader effort to position Lagos as a more competitive destination for domestic and international capital.

For diaspora entrepreneurs and professionals, the potential contribution extends beyond financial investment. Technical expertise, global business networks, research partnerships, mentorship and connections to international markets can all support enterprise development and job creation.

Realising these opportunities, however, depends on sustained attention to transparent public administration, dependable infrastructure, accessible information and effective investment facilitation. These remain important considerations for Lagosians abroad deciding whether to establish businesses, purchase property, return home or participate in development initiatives.



### A Continuing Bridge Between Lagos and Its Global Community

Governor Sanwo-Olu's diaspora agenda reflects an important development question: how can Lagos convert its extensive international connections into lasting economic, cultural and social benefits?

Through diaspora engagement structures, international investment missions, heritage initiatives and efforts to document Lagosians abroad, his administration has sought to strengthen that relationship. The long-term significance of these efforts will depend on their ability to generate measurable outcomes, including productive investments, employment, knowledge transfer, stronger cultural connections and more effective participation by citizens living overseas.

For Diaspora Champion Magazine, Lagos represents a compelling case study of the opportunities and challenges involved in connecting a major African economic centre with its global community. The central issue is not simply how to attract diaspora interest, but how to build the trust, institutions and practical partnerships required to turn that interest into sustainable development.

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# Mo Abudu

## Building a Global Platform for African Stories

From Nigerian television to an international media enterprise, Mo Abudu is taking African storytelling to new audiences.

Mosunmola Abudu, popularly known as Mo Abudu, is a Nigerian media entrepreneur, filmmaker and founder of EbonyLife Group. Through television, film production and creative initiatives, she has helped bring African stories and talent to wider international audiences.

Her latest milestone is EbonyLife Place London, a cultural and entertainment venue officially opened on 8 October 2026. Located in the Nine Elms area of south London, the venture combines a cinema dedicated to African and Black storytelling with restaurant, bar and retail spaces. It is designed to showcase Nollywood and films from across Africa and the wider Black diaspora, while creating opportunities for cultural exchange and creative collaboration.

The project extends Abudu's business beyond film and television production into a physical international destination for African creativity. Its programme is expected to include industry discussions, masterclasses, live performances and other cultural events.

For the African diaspora, EbonyLife Place London offers more than entertainment. It creates a dedicated space where African identities, stories, fashion, food and artistic expression can be experienced in a major global city. London Mayor Sadiq Khan attended the opening, underscoring the venue's cultural significance.

Abudu's wider career reflects a sustained effort to build platforms for African talent and expand the international reach of African-produced content. With the London venture, she is pursuing a broader ambition: to make African and Black storytelling a more visible and established part of the global cultural landscape.

Her London expansion marks another chapter in the internationalisation of African creative enterprise - connecting Nigerian ingenuity, diaspora audiences and global markets.

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Profile

# Martins Vincent Otse

## *The Digital Activist Challenging the System*

Popularly known as VeryDarkMan (VDM), Martins Vincent Otse is a Nigerian social media personality and digital activist whose outspoken videos have made him one of the country's most talked-about online figures. Through social media, he has built a following by challenging public officials, questioning institutions and drawing attention to alleged misconduct, consumer exploitation and social injustice.

His confrontational style has earned him both admiration and criticism. Supporters regard him as a fearless voice for ordinary Nigerians, while critics question his methods, particularly when serious allegations are made before evidence is independently established.

Otse's activism has extended beyond online commentary into community-focused initiatives associated with the Ratel Movement. However, the long-term impact and sustainability of such efforts remain important measures of their success.

His public journey has also attracted controversy, including scrutiny over some of his claims and encounters with law-enforcement authorities. These episodes highlight the responsibilities that come with digital influence, particularly the need to distinguish allegations from established facts.

For Nigeria's diaspora communities, VeryDarkMan represents a wider debate about citizen activism in the digital age: who holds powerful institutions accountable, how public pressure can drive action, and where the boundaries between advocacy, accusation and responsible journalism should lie.

Whatever one's view of his methods, his prominence reflects the growing power of social media to shape public debate in Nigeria - and the challenge of ensuring that influence is matched by credible evidence, fairness and accountability.



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# OGWALOPO 2026

# Owo Revives a Historic Cultural Tradition














The ancient kingdom of Owo, Ondo State, witnessed a significant cultural moment on September 26, 2026, with the revival of Ogwalopo, a traditional gathering that formed part of the kingdom's cultural heritage. Held at the palace of His Imperial Majesty, Oba (Dr.) Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye III, the Olowo of Owo, the celebration brought together indigenes, traditional institutions and cultural enthusiasts.

The event formed part of the 2026 Igogo Festival celebrations and provided an opportunity for the people of Owo to reconnect with their heritage through traditional displays, music, dance and communal fellowship. Its return marked a new chapter in the preservation and promotion of Owo's cultural identity.

The Ondo State Government's recognition of Igogo and Ogwalopo as state traditional festivals also offers opportunities to strengthen cultural preservation and develop tourism in the kingdom.

Beyond the festivities, Ogwalopo 2026 demonstrated the importance of preserving indigenous traditions and passing them on to younger generations. With sustained organisation, documentation and community participation, the celebration could become a stronger platform for cultural tourism, local enterprise and the promotion of Owo's heritage to audiences across Nigeria and the diaspora.

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# From Extraction to Transformation:

## How Strategic Investments in Mining and Energy Can End the Tragedy of Irregular Migration and Build Pros-perity in Nigeria

**HRM Oba Omololu Ibitoye Afilaka**
**The Alatorin of Atorin Ijesa, Nigeria**

**Address delivered at the**

**University of Porto, Portugal**

**Theme:** New Pathways to Migration - From Irregular Migration to a Partnership for Africa

**Preamble:** The Choice Between Two Seas

*Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,*

There are two seas in the story of Nigeria today.

One is the sea of solid minerals that lie beneath our soil - and across the African continent - and the sea off Bonny Island, where gas from a field discovered in 1973 and left dormant for more than fifty years will finally begin to flow in 2028, powering Nigeria's industrial future.

The other is the Mediterranean Sea - the route on which thousands of our young people risk death every year in desperate attempts at irregular crossing into Europe.

Both seas are about energy. One extracts and exports it. The other consumes our human energy and too often extinguishes it. Our task as leaders is to make the second sea irrelevant.

We stand at a historic inflection point. A proposed United States investment framework targeting Nigeria's extractive and mining sectors, the proven success of the Dangote Refinery, and the Final Investment Deci-sion on the $800 million Ima Gas Project by TotalEnergies and AMNI International are not three separate stories. They form one coherent narrative: beneficiation, value retention, and the creation of genuine rea-sons for our youth to build their lives in Africa while contributing to the world.

### 1. What the US Investment Signals

Whether described as the largest U.S. capital commitment to African extractives in history or as a genera-tional partnership framework, the scale matters for what it represents: a decisive shift from aid to industrial partnership.

The old model was simple and extractive: mine crude oil and solid minerals, export them raw to Europe, America, Asia and the Middle East, import refined products at a premium, and then watch our people leave again to labour and develop other economies. The late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti captured this cycle with charac-teristic clarity in M.A.S.S. - Movement Against Second Slavery.

The new model made possible by these investments is different: extract minerals in Nigeria, beneficiate them in Nigeria, create and retain value within Nigeria, and export processed or semi-processed products.

If this model is applied rigorously to critical minerals - lithium in Nasarawa, rare earths on the Jos Plateau, gold in Ilesa and Zamfara, bitumen in Ondo, tin and lead in Ebonyi, among others - the capital generated can achieve four transformative outcomes:

Build mid-stream processing capacity: smelters, refineries, lithium battery-precursor plants - industrialising the nation.

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Power the extractive industry with gas rather than diesel, lowering production costs and making Nigerian beneficiated products competitive on the global market.

Drive comprehensive digitalisation of the mining sector, creating high-value virtual jobs.

Convert migration from a necessity into a genuine choice, thereby saving lives and addressing the root driv-ers of human trafficking and the deaths of young Nigerians on desert and sea routes.

## 2. The Dangote Example - Proof That Beneficiation Works

We no longer need to theorise. We have living proof.

The Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals complex - 650,000 barrels per day and scaling toward 700,000 - has fundamentally altered Nigeria's economic narrative. As the Nigerian Exchange Group ob-served: because of it, Nigeria is now a net refined-fuel exporter; foreign reserves have reached their highest levels in two decades; the naira's exchange rate has improved; and petrol queues born of scarcity have dis-appeared.

The numbers confirm the transformation:

Net profit of $1.82 billion in the first half of 2026 on revenue exceeding $13 billion, following a loss in 2025.

Nigeria earned N998.5 billion from petrol exports in H1 2026 alone.

In August 2026, domestic receipts stood at 35.9 million litres per day against 14.6 million litres imported - with Dangote supplying 71 percent of national needs.

The complex became Europe's largest supplier of jet fuel during the Middle East supply disruption.

The lesson is unambiguous: when we refine our own crude, we retain foreign exchange, stabilise the curren-cy, create tens of thousands of indirect jobs, and move from price-taker to price-setter.

Apply the same logic to solid minerals. We must not export raw lithium and import batteries. We must not export raw gold and import jewellery. Beneficiation is not merely an economic policy; it is an anti-migration policy. Training young people from gemstone- and gold-bearing host communities in lapidary skills - cutting, polishing, engraving and setting - can generate localised employment and stimulate community economies. Yet too many still choose "japa." When one engages these young men and women in honest conversation, the

> *"The International Organization for Migration es-timates that more than 2,500 Africans died or went missing on Mediterranean routes between 2023 and 2025. These are not statistics. They are engineers, weld-ers, geologists - Af-rica's human capital."*

recurring theme is the absence of credible industrial opportunity at home. In regions where hope is scarce and dignified work is treated as a luxury, predatory networks flourish. Desperation becomes the re-cruiter for human traffickers, organ harvesters and those who trade in cheap, unprotected labour.

## 3. The Ima Gas Project - Fuel for Beneficiation

On 25 September, NNPC Ltd announced that AMNI International and TotalEnergies had reached Final In-vestment Decision on the $800 million offshore Ima Gas Project.

This decision is profound for three reasons:

It unlocks a 53-year stranded asset discovered in 1973 but never developed.

At peak it will produce 300 - 350 million standard cubic feet of gas per day, supplying approximately one-third of the feedgas for Nigeria LNG Train 7 and lifting national LNG capacity from 22 to 30 million tonnes per year.

Its structure offers a template: AMNI holds 60 percent, TotalEnergies 40 percent and operates the project, with more than 75 percent of financing from Nigerian banks and over 60 percent of the workforce drawn from host communities.

Gas is the indispensable bridge between crude oil and critical minerals. Lithium beneficiation, tin processing and solar-panel manufacturing all require reliable, low-cost, lower-emission power. Ima, together with the Iseni, Ubeta and HI projects enabled by the 2024 gas reforms, provides that foundation.

## 4. The Migration Nexus: From Boat Migration to Broadband Migration

Why does a young man from Edo or from my own domain of Atorin pay $5,000 to a trafficking network for a journey that so often ends in the Mediterranean?

Because he has calculated - however tragically - that no pathway to dignity exists at home.

The International Organization for Migration estimates that more than 2,500 Africans died or went missing on Mediterranean routes between 2023 and 2025. These are not statistics. They are engineers, welders, geologists - Africa's human capital.

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*Patrol boats alone will not solve this. Pathways will:*

### Pathway 1 - Industrial jobs from beneficiation

One integrated lithium processing plant can generate 4,000 direct and 12,000 indirect jobs - miners, chemical engineers, logistics professionals. A young person earning $1,200 a month in Lafia does not board a rubber boat in Libya.

### Pathway 2 - Virtual jobs: living in Africa, working for the world

The US mining sector Investment framework must mandate digital skills transfer. When American mining-technology companies operate Nigerian assets with AI, drone mapping and remote operations centres, train young people in Sokoto, Nasarawa or Zamfara to staff those centres. They earn in dollars, spend in naira, and live at home. This is legal, circular, dignified mobility - no sea crossing required.

### Pathway 3 - Gas-to-power-to-stay

Every megawatt generated from Ima gas and directed to industrial parks is a direct disincentive to irregular migration. It creates jobs and advances core Sustainable Development Goals.

I therefore propose a four-point compact for the deployment of this capital:

No Raw Export Clause - Any solid mineral extracted under the U.S. investment framework must achieve at least 40 percent local value addition before export. Beneficiation before shipment.

Gas-for-Industry Ring-Fence - Thirty percent of Ima and future non-associated gas should be ring-fenced for mineral-processing clusters, not solely for LNG export.

One Million Virtual Miners Programme - A joint U.S.—Nigeria initiative to train one million Nigerians in mining technology, remote operations, GIS and ESG compliance for remote employment with European and Ameri-can firms.

Migration as Investment Metric - Success must be measured not only in barrels and tonnes, but in the measurable reduction of irregular migration attempts from host communities.

### Conclusion

Excellencies, when Dangote refines our crude and when AMNI and TotalEnergies finally produce gas after half a century of waiting, they demonstrate one enduring truth:



Africa's challenge was never a lack of re-sources. It was a lack of value retention.

Let us build a Nigeria in which a young person in Zamfara sees a lithium refinery rather than a desert to cross; in which a young woman in Lagos, Edo or Port Harcourt sees a control-room job operating an Ima platform rather than a boat to Lampedusa.

Let us transform the Mediterranean from a graveyard into a bridge - a bridge of fibre-optic cables and knowledge exchange, not rubber boats and death traps. Our youth must become the generation that carries Nigeria, and by extension the African continent, into its rightful place among the comity of nations.

May we not squander this opportunity as the oil boom of the 1970s was squandered. May we convert extractive potential into a genuine social stabiliser - securing our energy future and, more importantly, the fu-ture of our human capital. And may the communities that host these resources - gas, solid minerals and all other extractives - stand as the primary beneficiaries of the opportunities created.

May we never return to the restive days of oil bunkering, unchecked mineral theft, or tragedies reminiscent of the Ogoni Nine. Rest in peace, Ken Saro-Wiwa.

I thank you.

*I remain your humble Kabiyesi,*

**HRM Oba Omololu Ibitoye Afilaka**

*The Alatorin of Atorin Ijesa*

*October 26-30, 2026*

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# Diaspora CHAMPION MAGAZINE

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COVER

*Bridging Nations, Building Opportunities*



AMBASSADOR

# VICTOR IKPEAZU

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Insights on Diplomacy, Diaspora and Global Partnerships

**PHOTO**
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