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...searchlight on African Women

Third Edition

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African Women Leadership Organization, AWLO Inducts Senator Ipalibo Harry-Banigo As Life Patroness



Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwosa Aladeselu

- ◆ **Namibia's All-Female Leadership Inspiring A Continent**
- ◆ **Still More Work To Be Done**
- ◆ **Takeaways From CSW 70**

From U to Us

Omu Anioma Remembered



Late Obi Martha Dunkwu
Anioma Royal Mother and
Omu Anioma.

In remembrance of the late Anioma Royal mother and Omu Anioma, Obi Martha Dunkwu (of blessed memory)

(1 6 t h February 2024 – 16th February 2026)

Monday, 16th February 2026, marks the second anniversary of the peaceful passing of the distinguished Anioma Royal Mother and revered Omu Anioma, late Obi

Martha Dunkwu (of blessed memory) a matriarch whose life and leadership left an indelible mark on the Anioma people

and the broader Nigerian community.

I wish to, on behalf of my humble self and family, extend my heartfelt reflections on the life of a woman whose unwavering commitment to cultural preservation, community service, and maternal leadership became hallmarks of her tenure as Omu Anioma.

Late Obi Martha Dunkwu was a bridge-builder a leader who championed peace, unity, and the advancement of women and youth in Anioma land and beyond. Her borderless leadership and mentorship earned her the crown of NNEOHA (Mother To All and Mother Without Borders) in Igboland.

Her legacy is one of compassion, dignity, and resolute service to her people.

Under her guidance, countless initiatives that advanced social welfare, cultural identity, and educational empowerment were realized, and her contributions continue to resonate within families, institutions, and communities across Delta State and beyond.

As we commemorate this solemn anniversary, I wish to most profoundly remember Omu Anioma as:

* A custodian of Anioma traditions, whose

wisdom nurtured revival and respect for our shared heritage;

* An advocate for women's leadership, empowering countless individuals to pursue excellence and community engagement;

* A mother to many, whose warmth, encouragement, and spiritual guidance provided strength to families and leaders alike;

* A symbol of dignity whose life exemplified service over self.

Though she departed this world on 16th February 2024, the impact of her life endures. We honour her memory in prayer, gratitude, and continued commitment to the principles she championed.

As a son and subject she held so dear in her lifetime, I pray that Almighty God continues to comfort her family, the Anioma people, traditional institutions, and all whose lives were touched by the late Royal Mother. May her gentle soul rest in perfect peace.

Major General Raymond Ochei (Rtd), Ph.D, DD, FCNA, F.IoD, mni

Congratulations and fantastic job on this publication!

The stories are captivating and beautifully delivered. You have grown since the initial publication, with a more relaxed and confident delivery.

I am incredibly proud of you and wish you even more success as you continue to develop the hallmark style of a distinguished women's magazine.

Women's history isn't complete without your relentless contributions kudos to you!

Keep shining and leading the way. God bless you and grant you all the strength and inspiration you need, in Jesus' name.

- HRM Queen Josephine Diette-Spiff

I find this edition particularly impressive. Its wide coverage and editorial quality combine to place it in a class of its own. Good work. Also, let me not forget to commend your photographer. You look really good in the enclosed pictures

I would like to have a hard copy of the magazine. How much would it cost to subscribe?

Prof Sophia Ogwude

Congratulations galore! I read it cover to cover during the Christmas holiday.

Please sustain the publication as your legacy. God bless you.

Prof Innocent Ogwude Obi Martha Dunkwu

GENDER MILESTONES



Nigeria's Dr. Emem Okon (2nd from right) shares a moment with fellow gender equality advocates from other parts of the world at CSW70, US.

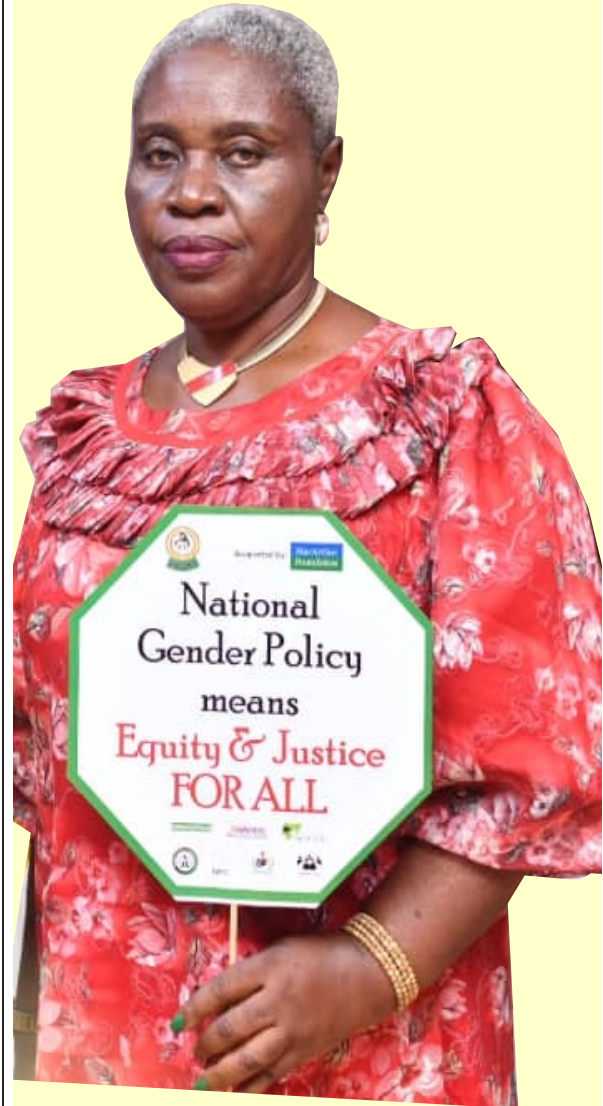


Ene Ede (standing left) poses with fellow participants at an ECOWAS @ 50 meeting at Abuja.

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WAÒ! Time rolls. The women movement may not have taken us yet to where we want to be, be but some very significant things are already happening.

Dots of positive achievements which when connected over time, will show that our meetings, planning and push, are not in vain. As the month of March rolled in marking the Women Month, records of giant strides by women and girls of African origin came to light-girls are smashing the barriers that held us back setting new records, women are moving into spaces hitherto reserved for men and proving their mettle and, even in the local communities where patriarchy is the norm, attitudes are changing.

Though we are yet to regain what we lost to the devastation of COVID-19, there is evidence that if we persist with more push, the world will soon harken to our demands.

Pride swells when men acknowledge the performance of our all-women Namibia key government leadership that is creating subtle but critical changes in that country, pointing the way for more future space for African women on the decision table.

This edition presents stories of women of conviction who have made a difference despite coming in, from silent, ordinary and obstacle filled paths. *AmazonAfrica* salutes these women and girls and awaits more Amazon's. Africa sure has them.

Enjoy the package!


Chief Constance Meju
 Publisher/Editor.

Still A Lot More To Be Done

- Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwosa Aladeselu



Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwosa Aladeselu

put them there. It is a human reaction, but it is not a popular one. There are also people who are grateful. There are people who have looked up to the person that brought them to where they are and they have gone to celebrate them; sometimes they raise a foundation in their names, sometimes they celebrate them when they die. Those things are the ones the media should be

Although they will say the party structure, the way the party leadership is, which is not democratic, like now, you have Wike saying he put everybody in office, that doesn't leave room for others to bring in people, have a voice...

But at least, there is only one Wike in Nigeria and we have 774 local government areas in Nigeria and these 774 LGAs have at least 190 wards! So Wike cannot control all that power. What about the other people? Are they also controlling? Wike is selfish and wicked on his own, just because what he did was not good. You can empower people to become visible but you cannot enslave them. We are not asking of people who will help women and later enslave them. No, there are other people who have helped other men to climb, they have not enslaved them. Some of them (the ones helped) have also been ungrateful to those who

portraying so that people will also be encouraged to help others.

Now, the Women Affairs Ministry, what do you think it should be doing to help the women's cause?

Women Affairs Ministry, should be a melting pot of all the desires, of the actions, all the plans, all the programmes of women in Nigeria. The Ministry of Women Affairs, Abuja should coordinate, collaborate with different state ministries. It should also ensure that the ministries at state level, are not dead, not asleep and should call meetings regularly, collate information from the states regularly. It should have a colloquium of programmes, ideas of outcomes from different states which researchers can also use to tell us about the advancement of women in

Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwosa Aladeselu is a long term women empowerment advocate. A seasoned politician, she is the founding president of the African Women Empowerment Guild, AWEG.

In this concluding interview with AmazonaAfrica, Dr. Nosakhare traces the challenges of women in Nigerian politics and proffers solutions on the way to success.

Nigeria, but, what we see the Ministry doing is, they circulate around Abuja. Today, they are even holding a meeting, they call Edo State person in Abuja, call Delta State person in Abuja, call Cross River person in Abuja and at the end of the day, it is Abuja people that are holding the meeting. These are persons who may not be in touch with the home states. Oftentimes, I go to such meetings, when I get there, before you know it, they say there are five/four people from Edo State. I say, well, only two of us were invited here; they have added other people. Next time when they want to do anything for Edo State, they don't even need to call us again! They will say abeg, somebody is close by and those are the things that are spoiling the issues.

The political parties are supposed to have gender policies, how do we get them to respect their gender policy?

Advocacy. Through advocacy, strong advocacy. Usually, the political parties don't put their money where their mouth is in the sense that those policies are there. It was the PDP that started it, APC followed when they won. APC came and only those individuals who read the constitution implement it at their own end. I give you an example, the PDP had a gender policy in their constitution for nomination for participation, it was only in the time of Obaseki in Edo State that he asked for five

persons to be nominated either to attend a meeting or to be considered for appointment out of which he would take one or two persons. We insisted that out of the five, two must be women. If every state action persons take their party constitution to implement like that, there will be women almost everywhere. The first time this thing was raised was when Obasanjo in 1999, said he sent messages to all the states to nominate women for minister, there were some states that did not nominate one woman at all-half or more than half of the states did not nominate one woman. It was when he called a meeting of women NGOs that he told us this at Sheraton Hotel. So you find that it is a matter of the individual. The party spirit is different, the individual mentality and mode of operation, is different.

If the chairman of a party will want to call for a meeting and he calls mostly all the men and by the time they even ask one woman to come, now they have one woman as women leader in the meeting of about 12 party officials only one woman is there, what voice does she have? More often than not, that woman is a token woman, she does not have a voice, she cannot even challenge if something is going wrong at the meeting. This has put women in bad light. If women's aspirations are being considered, she will not say anything so long as she gets her small allowance to get back home from the

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Still A Lot More To Be Done

- Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwesa Aladeselu

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meeting. Those are the things affecting women.

Since women are mainly the voters in elections, shouldn't we now use that as a negotiation power before elections to state, if we are supporting this party, this is what we want, this is what we want....

That notion has been mooted a couple of times. Why it has not succeeded is that the people with the ideas don't have the power for the action. Two of us are activists, we say women, women, we are not going to vote. How do you translate that to a woman who is looking for N2000 to buy foodstuff and she gets it before she leaves her house? How is she going to cooperate with you? Two of us are talking, we don't have what it takes to put any contribution, so what I have done so far has not been contribution? No food on their tables and we are asking them to make that sacrifice for the women that we would not vote for?

You know, it is a very good idea, like I was talking about one woman who was Speaker here, a couple of times, I raised up the mud in the press to organize a press conference to agitate against her oppressors, but the last one, I have even called agitators both in her party and her opposition party, they were willing to say that as long as she is the one they are oppressing, all of us must come out. We want to organize a small rally in front of the state assembly and I said to her, Auntie, we are almost through with our plan, can you bring money for us to try and buy a few things and also give some women some money to go home? She said no, where would she get money, that that is supposed to be our contributions. Eeh, that should be my contribution? It is when I put my own food allowance to project your cause that you will say I have contributed to it? All the one I have been carrying microphone and crying out and everyone is calling me one man riot squad, I have not contributed?

In another situation they said we should have an all-women political party and that was a farce because, society is not formed like that, given that if you were to form an all-women political party, half of them will not follow the cause of that party. And in my development work, I tried to look at what Shell is doing in their different communities, I came across a cooperative society that Shell was funding. A man was the chairman of the cooperative. A man, as head of an all-women cooperative society?



Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwesa Aladeselu

Why was that?

Well, I was not there; maybe because they didn't have anybody who is

“
Until it comes to a point where the local women at the grassroots understand what we are raising at the national, we will not have any followers....They may follow you halfway and drop on the way.
”

educated, they could not even get an educated female or because they could not trust another woman. Why will a woman like me come and be chairman? Some will say, it is even better we have a man so that we know we dey cooperate. So, you want to understand the mentality of women before you try to go for that kind of motion that says let's have an all-women political party. If you don't understand how women work, you will just spend your money for nothing. You can do that, after all that, there are about 18 political parties now, if that becomes one of them. But to say that the women have risen, until it comes to a point where the local women at the grassroots understand what we are

raising at the national, we will not have any followers....They may follow you halfway and drop on the way. That has always been the little fear and a problem.

There have been some suggestions that there is no bridge between the grassroots women and the women at the center, the ones at the state and national level and that affecting what has been done for women inclusion.

That is the fact I have just explained, that we who are raising our voices saying, let's give women a chance, do this, do that, when the time of election comes, that all these women should support this woman for election. And this other woman who gets N2000 to buy some salt and some rice in her family, after collecting that money, she has a conscience. She now develops the conscience and votes for the person who gave, it will be easy but when some people are still looking for how to feed their children, when politics is still at the primordial level in Nigeria, it is going to be difficult. If the average family is self-sufficient economically, self-reliant, and politicians know this, that was how they won election in Ekiti.

In the last election in Ekiti State, the women were swearing, cursing APC- 'Alah', APC no go die well! See all, the suffering!' 'Tinubu did this, Tinubu did that,' APC kept quiet. At the time of the election, they were getting N10,000. Before you know it, one old woman that had

not seen N2000 in her hand for almost a whole year saw N10,000. She called her neighbor, "Why are you still at home? A vote is N10,000!" And before you know it, the result changed in expectation. Even the NGO people who were there said it, that what we were expecting the election to produce is not what it produced. That is the problem.

The major thing is that we need to address poverty.

Poverty! We need to address poverty before democracy can make sense. Democracy will not make sense until everybody has the wherewithal to raise their voices. How can you raise

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Ability In Disability

Disability and Climate Change

By: *Blessing Chinemerem Agbakwuru -
A woman living with disability.*



In a world of discrimination, isolation and disability are limitations..

Our voices hungered to be heard

We sought for soccour as our lives were soaked in agony..

I, Disability tried and pushed for acceptance and inclusivity engagement..

And at the verge of winning..., I was struck by climate change disaster - a mighty wave of weather pattern that meandered our uniqueness

But disability stood on my ground to fight through.

Oh what a world

Oh who will step in for my victory?

In my confusing state of pains and agony comes a saviour - Chief Dr. Emem Okon - a warrior and a gladiator whose powerful arms broke down alm of disability, setting us free...

Now, I'm a survivor

I'm a champion

And climate change can't stop me

Climate change can't overwhelm me.

Oh Climate change, climate change...

Take my hands, let's build a powerful bond of peace and love... I'm now empowered for victory to rule my environment and make the world a better place

No longer will I, Disability be afraid of your disasters like flood, erosion, food insecurity, air pollution and health crisis

You 've done your worst and I'm here to attack and stop you

I'm brave

I'm confident

And like the eagles, I soar higher above climate crisis.

Blind Jurist

Jessikah Inaba made legal history in the United Kingdom by becoming the country's first black and blind female barrister.

At just 23 years old, she qualified for the Bar after completing a rigorous five-year programme at the University of London.

Inaba, who was born with bilateral microphthalmia, completed her entire degree and master's course using Braille.



Barr. Jessikah Inaba

Her achievement has been hailed by legal organizations like the Bar Council as a landmark moment for diversity, effectively breaking what she describes as a "triple-glazed glass ceiling" consisting of barriers related to her gender, race and disability.

Her journey was marked by significant systemic challenges and personal sacrifice. Owing to lack of accessible materials, Inaba often spent more time transcribing textbooks into Braille than actually studying, sometimes functioning on only three hours of sleep. This intense pressure led to health struggles, including a hospitalization in 2019.

Despite these hurdles and the occasional experience of bias within the legal system, she remains committed to her career and hopes her success will pave the way for other marginalized individuals. She now plans to pursue a pupillage, aiming to use her platform to advocate for greater inclusivity and accessibility within the legal profession.

#amazing #kindness #compassion #nevergiveup, #caughtinprovidenc



Nnena Kalu Makes History As First Artist With a Learning Disability To Win The Turner Prize

ELEVATE-An Experience Sharing Day For Non-Profit Leaders

Story by Erabanabari Theophilus

A first-ever Breakfast Retreat for Women leaders in Non-Profit Organizations was organized by Collective Pathways in Peace and Development for Women and Girls Initiative, with theme, 'Elevate'. The event held Thursday, April 2 at Mina Hotels in Port Harcourt.

The forum focused on balancing Strategic Networking, Professional Development, and Personal Wellness, to combat burnout.

Keynote speech on Leadership, Strategic Partnership building was presented and a Panel Discussions on Sector-specific challenges, and time for rejuvenation, to motivate participating women leaders on how to translate their personal growth into further action and systemic change.

Here's wishing Rita Kigbara, ED Collective Pathways, a Happy Golden Age!

This meeting was one meeting that will shape the future of women leaders in the Non-profit sector. We gathered, connected, networked and shared great insights and ideas.

Women shared their leadership journey stories in a crowd of the experienced, upcoming and young activists.

The session on 'Purpose Driven Leadership', delivered by Chief Dr. Emem Bridget Okon, Niger Delta's foremost advocate for environmental justice for women, brought to the fore very critical discussions around driving change purposefully, driving for funds to make needed organizational impact.

Dr. Emem noted that you need people to drive the process; not you carrying doing everything as an ED. "Get people involved to drive...so you can have time for yourself.

"Yes self-care is very important, do not be so overwhelmed with driving change and making impact that you forget to impact yourself in the most little way possible", she advised. You need to stay alive to drive and lead change purposefully.

Leading with purpose requires you to be more than intentional, it requires you being deliberate in driving position change and confronting norms and bias.

A first-ever Breakfast Retreat for Women leaders in Non-Profit Organizations was organized by Collective Pathways in Peace and Development for Women and Girls Initiative, with theme: Elevate. The event held on Thursday, April 2 at Mina Hotels in Port Harcourt.

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Here's wishing Rita Kigbara, ED Collective Pathways, a happy birthday!

'Public Speaking and Executive Presence', handled by Florence Kayemba, country director of Stakeholder Democracy Network was a very powerful session.

She told us that executive presence doesn't mean you should be loud and always want to be on the spotlight, but it should be a combination of qualities that make you respected, and trusted. The communities should

trust you because of your impact not your operations; donors should trust you because you will always deliver on your outcomes....it goes beyond how you dress.

So it's deep. Build relationships, let it be your currency, she added.

Thank you Barrister Deborah Effiong, seasoned lawyer and gender expert for being an amazing anchor.

Strategic partnership building and Networking, Madam, Nancy Iheduru PHD, respected coach and pastor, stressed that we should stop collecting contacts that we do not follow-up on and start building collaborations, strategic and sustainable partnerships . Partnerships and networking when strategic she

pointed out, can deliver to you, resources that you need for impact. Be intentional and deliberate about this.

Chief Constance Yvonne Meju, veteran media expert, co-publisher **National Point Newspaper** and publisher **AmazonaAfrica Magazine**, took us through how to overcome challenges while leading as a woman. She reiterated that for you to lead you must be extremely good at your job and performance and keep investing in your personal development.

Yes, performance should be gender neutral.

Thank you so much Rita Ogwa Kigbara for putting together the breakfast retreat

for women leaders in the non-profit sector, the intergenerational gathering was beautiful and impactful.



Namibia: Inspiring A Continent

Namibia became the first country to open the door to an all-female government leadership last year. AmazonaAfrica searched to see if this paradigm shift is working fine and with assistance from AI, brings you this encouraging news that Women Can Indeed Make A Difference.



President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah

Vice President Lucia Witbooi

Speaker, Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila

Namibia has made history by becoming the first country in the world where women simultaneously hold the top three leadership positions: President, Vice President, and Speaker of the National Assembly. President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Vice President Lucia Witbooi, and Speaker Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila have been breaking barriers and setting new precedents for women's empowerment in Africa. This development marks a significant milestone in Namibia's political evolution, reinforcing the country's commitment to inclusive leadership.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has recognized this achievement as a watershed moment in African governance, demonstrating that women's leadership is not about token representation but about transformational governance. With women holding key ministerial positions, including finance, foreign affairs, health, education, and gender equality, Namibia is being watched globally for its pioneering administration in the African Continent.

However, some critics argue that having women in power doesn't automatically guarantee gender equality. Despite the historic appointments, the share of women in Parliament has fallen to 33 per cent, prompting calls for a law that obliges political parties to promote equality. Additionally, the appointment of mostly male regional governors has raised concerns about the government's commitment to systematically pursuing equality.

The positive point is that with this all-female top government leadership, marks a significant milestone in the country's history and serves as a model for women's empowerment in Africa.

Positive Impact

Namibia's leadership model has inspired other African nations to strive for greater representation of women in leadership roles. It demonstrates the government's commitment to inclusive governance and gender equality even as sister African countries continue to push against bringing women onboard.

This new shift comes with challenges as centuries of barriers from patriarchy deeply rooted in governance are not changes to overcome easily. These include:

Converting political successes into structural progress, addressing violence against women, and ensuring true participation of women in governance remain key challenges.

Women's Representation- Women hold 57 per cent of

cabinet positions and 38.5% of seats in the National Assembly, with key ministries led by women, such as finance, health, education, and international relations.

Economic Empowerment: The government has introduced financial instruments to support women-led MSMEs, particularly in sectors like agriculture, tourism, renewable energy, and digital services but despite progress, women, especially in rural areas, still face economic exclusion, limited access to credit, land, and markets, and gender-based violence.

President Nandi-Ndaitwah's Initiatives

The government is not sleeping. It has set a few initiatives in motion.

Economic Diversification: The president has pledged to boost investments in the agricultural sector and diversify the resource-focused economy to address high unemployment rates.

Green Hydrogen Sector: The administration plans to accelerate policy support and infrastructure to make Namibia a competitive energy exporter.

Free Tertiary Education: The government plans to implement free tertiary education for undergraduate students from low-income households, starting with the 2026 academic year.

Missing links and weaknesses that need to be addressed

Identified missing links and weaknesses that need to be addressed in Namibia's pursuit of gender equality include:

Limited Economic Empowerment: Women face challenges such as limited access to financial resources, socio-cultural norms, and lack of social protection, hindering their ability to thrive in business.

Inadequate Representation: Despite progress, women remain under-represented in key leadership positions, particularly in sectors like agriculture and regional councils.

Systemic Barriers: Entrenched patriarchal structures and cultural norms continue to hinder progress toward gender equality.

Gender-Based Violence: Namibia still struggles with high rates of gender-based violence, necessitating stronger enforcement of legal protections and community-driven interventions.

Inequitable Access to Opportunities: Women in rural areas face significant challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

To address these challenges, Namibia needs to focus on:

Strengthening Policy Implementation: Ensuring effective enforcement of policies and laws, particularly in rural areas.

*Promoting Economic Inclusion: Providing targeted support for women-owned businesses and financial inclusion programs.

*Addressing Sociocultural Norms: Engaging in community-

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Namibia: Inspiring A Continent

driven initiatives to challenge and change patriarchal attitudes and norms.

-Increasing Representation: Implementing measures to increase women's representation in key leadership positions and sectors.

How are the men responding to this all-female leadership?

Men's responses to Namibia's all-female leadership have been largely positive, with many leaders and analysts praising the move as a symbol of democratic progress and gender equality. Former Malawian President Joyce Banda praised President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah's extensive experience, stating that she would bring people together and be a role model for young women. South Africa's former deputy leader, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, also expressed excitement about Nandi-Ndaitwah's inauguration, predicting that she would lead effectively and bring unity¹.

Some analysts, like Erika Thomas, emphasize the need for national unity and support for the new leadership, focusing on addressing poverty, unemployment, hunger and division. Thomas also notes that the new Cabinet's selection conveys a message of no tolerance for internal conflict, highlighting the importance of focusing on the nation's problems rather than petty squabbles.

In terms of specific reactions from Namibian men, there isn't much information available. However, the country's political party, SWAPO, has shown support for the leadership, with Nandi-Ndaitwah winning 57.31% of the vote to become the country's fifth president. The party's secretary for information and mobilization, Nandi-Ndaitwah has been instrumental in shaping Namibia's policies, including those related to gender equality.

Men's responses to Namibia's all-female leadership have been largely positive, with many leaders and analysts praising the move as a symbol of democratic progress and gender equality.

According to a study on the impact of gender quotas in Namibia, men didn't show significant shifts in attitudes toward female leaders after the introduction of a 50/50 gender quota policy by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). However, women's attitudes toward female leaders improved significantly, indicating that increased representation can positively influence women's perceptions of female leadership.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has also lauded Namibia's achievement, calling it a "revolution in governance" that demonstrates women's leadership is not about token representation but about transformational governance. The Commission urges other African nations to emulate Namibia's example by implementing constitutional reforms to enable women's leadership, establishing quotas for women's political participation, and investing in leadership pipelines for aspiring female politicians.

Key Highlights:

- Positive Reception: Men's reactions to Namibia's all-female leadership have been largely positive, with praise for the country's commitment to gender equality.

- Increased Representation: Namibia's government has made significant strides in promoting women's representation, with women holding 57% of cabinet positions and 38.5% of seats in the National Assembly.



President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah

Vice President Lucia Witbooi

Speaker, Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila

- Inspiring a New Generation: The historic appointment of President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and Vice President Lucia Witbooi serves as a powerful example for young African women, showing that leadership is not limited by gender.

In the rural communities, has this new leadership caused some cultural changes with regards to patriarchy?

In rural Namibian communities, the new leadership has indeed led to cultural changes regarding patriarchy. Traditional leaders are now more supportive of women's rights, and there's a growing recognition of women's leadership capacities. For instance, the Uukwambi Traditional Authority has made significant strides in promoting women's participation in decision-making and leadership. They've appointed women to leadership positions and abolished practices like widow chasing and property grabbing, which previously marginalized women.

Moreover, there's been a shift in societal perceptions, with men becoming more open to women's leadership. Studies have shown that men who live in villages with female leaders are more likely to support women's leadership and participate equally in community activities. The Traditional Authority's efforts to empower women have also led to increased participation of women in customary courts and community meetings.

So in conclusion, **AmazonaAfrica** believes that the Namibian female run government is on the right path and fully aware of its need areas. It is recording increased women participation in governance. Women are now more actively involved in decision-making processes and leadership roles in rural communities.

There is a Shift in Societal Perceptions- Men are becoming more accepting of women's leadership, and there's a growing recognition of women's capacities. Harmful Traditional Practices are being abolished. Traditional leaders have abolished practices like widow chasing and property grabbing, which previously marginalized women.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist and entrenched patriarchal structures continue to hinder progress. Sustained efforts are needed to reshape societal attitudes toward gender roles. These should be done through:

- Strengthening Policy Implementation: Ensuring effective enforcement of policies and laws, particularly in rural areas providing training and capacity-building programs for law enforcement agencies, judiciary and other stakeholders can help ensure effective implementation of policies and laws.

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Refuse To Be Destroyed

She was 21. He was 61. And when she tried to leave him, Pablo Picasso looked at her and laughed: "Nobody leaves Picasso." She left anyway and became the only woman who ever did.

Pablo Picasso didn't just love women. He consumed them. He destroyed them. Literally.

Marie-Thérèse Walter, his lover, ended her life four years after his death unable to exist without him even in memory. Dora Maar, the brilliant photographer immortalized as "The Weeping Woman," spent years in psychiatric care after he discarded her. Jacqueline Roque, his second wife, shot herself thirteen years after he died.

The pattern was always the same: Picasso found a young, talented woman, devoured her youth, her art, her identity, and painted her obsessively. Then, when he was finished, he moved on.

He called women "goddesses or doormats." He also called them "machines for suffering." For decades, no woman escaped him. They either stayed until he left, or they broke trying.

Until Françoise Gilot. Paris, 1943. The city dark, occupied by Nazis, cafés half-empty, tense. In one smoke-filled room, 21-year-old Françoise a painting student with fierce intelligence and fiercer eyes met the 61-year-old Picasso.

He looked at her and said, "You're so young. I could be your father."

She met his gaze without flinching. "You're not my father."

That was Françoise steel wrapped in grace. For ten years, she lived in his orbit. She painted. She loved him. She bore him two children Claude and Paloma. He painted her hundreds of times, called her his muse, his "woman who saw too much."

But Françoise saw the trap. "I loved him," she later said, "but I also saw how he needed to destroy the thing he loved most."

By the early 1950s, the mask had slipped. Picasso once charming, once brilliant had become cruel. He demanded worship, not partnership. Every conversation a struggle, every silence psychological warfare. He pitted her against his other women. Belittled her art. Raged at her independence.

Other women had crumbled under this. Dora Maar had tried to resist and ended up institutionalized. Marie-Thérèse had accepted the role of perpetual mistress, waiting for scraps of attention.

Françoise was different. One morning in 1953, after another night of shouting and manipulation, she stood in their Vallauris villa and faced herself in the mirror. She was 32, but felt ancient. Behind her, Picasso's paintings covered every wall like watchful eyes.

She turned to him and said quietly, "I'm leaving."

Picasso laughed. Cold, disbelieving the laugh of a man who had never been refused.

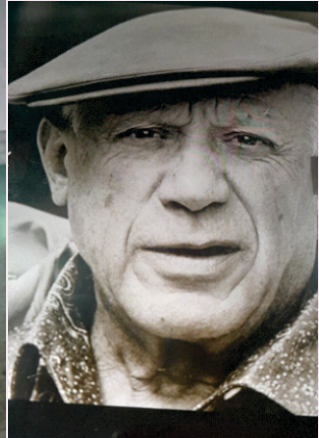
"You can't leave me. Nobody leaves Picasso."

She left anyway. Quietly. Packed her things, took her children, and walked out of the villa, out of

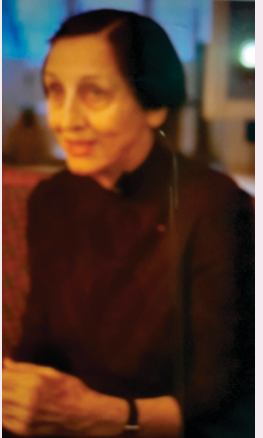
Relationships are sometimes difficult to navigate. Many women have lost their rhythm trying to navigate a union that requires a balance between who you are and who you are with. Remaining true to yourself and cause is important. This story about the love lives of women around a famous world artist tells a lot about what women, especially strong women, have to contend with in the society.



Young Françoise Gilot



Pablo Picasso



Old Françoise Gilot

his shadow, out of his control. No drama. No breakdown. Just the quiet power of a woman reclaiming her soul.

"I wasn't a prisoner," she said later. "I came when I wanted to and I left when I wanted to."

Picasso was stunned. Furious. He tried to destroy her. Told gallery owners across Europe and America never to show her work. Spread rumors she was unstable, ungrateful, nothing without him. "People will never care about you," he sneered.

she said. "Jonas wanted to heal it." She married Salk in 1970; they remained partners until his death in 1995. With him, she experienced respect, partnership, and love not domination.

Meanwhile, her art flourished. Vibrant, strong, unapologetically hers, her work appeared in the Met, MoMA, Centre Pompidou. Her paintings spoke of survival, resilience, and rebirth.

She became exactly what Picasso feared: remembered for her own brilliance, not his.

Picasso died in 1973 at 91, wealthy and surrounded by art, but alone. Françoise lived until 2023 dying peacefully at 101, outliving him by fifty years. In those years, she painted, taught, inspired, watched her children and grandchildren thrive. She proved that a woman could survive Picasso and emerge not as a footnote, but as a force.

Asked late in life how she found the courage to leave, she said simply:

"Because freedom is the only love worth keeping."

Picasso painted her face hundreds of times, trying to capture, control, and own her.

Françoise painted her own destiny.

She was 21 when she met the most powerful man in the art world. 32 when she walked away. 101 when she died having spent 70 years proving she was never his muse.

She was always the artist.

Pablo Picasso destroyed every woman he touched. Except one.

Françoise Gilot didn't just survive Picasso. She walked out of his shadow and into her own brilliant light and stayed there for the rest of her extraordinary life.

Sometimes, the greatest act of creation is refusing to be destroyed."

- Ancient History

“Freedom is the only love worth keeping.”

But Françoise refused to vanish. She painted. Raised her children alone. Rebuilt her career, gallery by gallery, painting by painting.

In 1964, she published *Life with Picasso* an unflinching memoir exposing his cruelty. Critics called it vengeful; Picasso's friends called it betrayal; Picasso himself tried to ban it. Françoise called it freedom.

"I owed the truth to other women," she said. "So they would know they could survive him too."

The book became an international bestseller. The world finally saw behind the genius the manipulation, the destruction, the power wielded over the women who loved him.

Years later, she found love again with Dr. Jonas Salk, the virologist who developed the polio vaccine. "Picasso wanted to possess the world,"

Environment Defender

Wangari Maathai: Africa's First Female Nobel Peace Prize Winner

Her husband divorced her because she was "too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn, and too hard to control."

She became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. And she planted 51 million trees.

In 1940, a girl named Wangari Maathai was born in a small village in rural Kenya.

She grew up in the highlands, surrounded by forests. She watched her mother gather firewood, collect water from clean streams, and harvest food from rich soil all sustained by the trees that covered the land.

It was a childhood of modest means but natural abundance.

Then Wangari did something almost unheard of for a Kenyan girl in the 1940s-50s: she went to school. She was smart. Exceptionally smart. She won a scholarship to study in the United States, earning a bachelor's degree in biology, then a master's degree. In 1971, she returned to Kenya and earned her Ph.D. in Veterinary Anatomy from the University of Nairobi.

She became the first woman in East and Central Africa to hold a doctorate degree. At 31 years old, she was a professor, a scholar, and a trailblazer.

But when she returned to her rural homeland to visit family, she was devastated by what she saw. The forests were gone. Vast stretches of land that had been covered in trees during her childhood were now barren.

Trees had been cut down for timber, cleared for commercial agriculture, destroyed by development. And the consequences were catastrophic for rural communities: Streams had dried up no trees meant no water retention

Soil erosion destroyed farmland. Firewood became scarce, forcing women to walk hours to find it. Food security collapsed as land became unproductive.

The women in these communities who gathered water, collected firewood, and grew food bore the brunt of environmental destruction.

Wangari Maathai saw the problem clearly: You cannot have healthy communities without a healthy environment.

In 1977, she founded the Green Belt Movement



Wangari Maathai, too stubborn to back down.

with a simple idea: plant trees. Not through government programs or large NGOs. Through the rural women whose lives depended on environmental health.

Wangari trained women to start tree nurseries in their villages. They would grow seedlings, plant them, care for them, and receive a small payment for each tree that survived—creating both environmental restoration and economic opportunity.

The women, many of them poor and illiterate, learned environmental stewardship.

They became leaders in their communities. They earned income. They gained confidence. What started as a small pilot project grew exponentially. Within years, thousands of women across Kenya were planting trees. Tens of thousands. Hundreds of thousands.

By the time she died in 2011, the Green Belt Movement had planted over 51 million trees across Kenya. 51 million!

Wangari Maathai: Africa's First Female Nobel Peace Prize Winner

Cont'd from page 11

Streams began flowing again. Soil erosion decreased. Women no longer walked hours for firewood. Rural communities regained food security.

But Wangari didn't stop at trees. She recognized that environmental destruction was connected to political corruption, poverty, and oppression. You couldn't fix the environment without addressing the systems that destroyed it.

So she became a political activist.

In the 1980s-90s, Kenya was ruled by President Daniel arap Moi's authoritarian regime. Dissent was crushed. Democracy was suppressed. Political opponents were jailed or killed.

Wangari Maathai stood up anyway.

When President Arap Moi proposed building a massive skyscraper in Uhuru Park, one of Nairobi's few green spaces, Wangari organized protests.

The government threatened her. She was called unpatriotic, a troublemaker, a puppet of foreign interests. She didn't back down.

International pressure, driven partly by Wangari's advocacy, forced the government to abandon the project. Uhuru Park was saved.

But there were consequences. Wangari was beaten by police during protests. She was arrested multiple times. She received death threats. She lost her job at the University of Nairobi due to political pressure. And her husband divorced her.

During the divorce proceedings in 1979-1980, her husband's lawyer reportedly stated that Wangari was **"too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn, and too hard to control."**

The judge agreed, granting the divorce.

And Wangari's response? She kept working. She continued organizing. She planted more trees. She challenged the government. She advocated for democracy, women's rights, and environmental justice. She was arrested again in 1992 during pro-democracy protests, spending time in jail with other activists.

International organizations began recognizing her courage. She won environmental awards, human rights honors, and global recognition.

But the ultimate vindication came in 2004. On October 8, 2004, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced that Wangari Maathai had won the Nobel Peace Prize, the first African woman ever to receive the honor.

The citation read: **"for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace."**

The Nobel Committee recognized what Wangari had always known: environmental health, democracy, and peace are inseparable.

You cannot have peace without justice. You cannot have justice without healthy ecosystems. You

cannot have healthy ecosystems without empowering the people especially, women who, depend on them.

Wangari's Nobel Prize was a triumph not just for her, but for the thousands of women who'd planted trees, the activists who'd fought for democracy, and the communities that had reclaimed their environment.

In 2002, after Kenya transitioned to democratic elections, Wangari was elected to Parliament. From 2003-2005, she served as Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources.

The woman who'd been arrested for challenging the government was now part of it working from within to continue her environmental and democratic mission.

Wangari Maathai died on September 25, 2011, at age 71 from ovarian cancer.

By then, she had transformed Kenya's environmental landscape, empowered tens of thousands of women, helped bring democracy to her country, and inspired global environmental movements.

The Green Belt Movement continues today, still planting trees, still empowering women; still carrying forward Wangari's vision.

Her legacy is visible across Kenya in the 51 million trees that now provide shade, water, and life. But her deeper legacy is the model she provided: that environmental justice and social justice are one fight.

Wangari Maathai proved that you don't need massive resources to change the world.

You need:

A clear vision

The courage to act

The willingness to empower others

The refusal to quit when threatened.

Her ex-husband said she was "too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn, and too hard to control."

He meant it as an insult. History remembers it as the perfect description of a Nobel Prize winner.

She was too educated: first woman in her region with a PhD.

She was too strong enduring beatings, arrests, and threats without backing down.

She was too successful—51 million trees, a Nobel Prize, a transformed nation.

She was too stubborn refusing to accept that poverty, environmental destruction, and oppression were inevitable.

She was too hard to control which, is exactly what made her great.

She proved that one woman with a vision and the courage to act can transform a nation: One tree. One woman. One seed at a time.

Sometimes being "too much" for small minds means you're exactly enough to change the world. Wangari Maathai was too much. And that's why she changed everything.

-sourced from Facebook.

Key Takeaways From CSW70 (March 10-19, 2026)



Some of the delegates from different parts of the world

Access to Justice as Priority: The central theme focused on strengthening legal systems to ensure justice for all women and girls, specifically by formally recognizing community justice workers and paralegals in national legal frameworks.

Digital Justice and AI Governance: A major focus was placed on new, agreed-upon commitments regarding digital justice, aimed at protecting women and girls from technology-facilitated gender-based violence and ensuring ethical AI development.

Global Consensus with US Opposition: The final document was adopted with broad support but not through the traditional consensus method, as the United States voted against it. The US argued that the text included "ambiguous language promoting gender ideology" and "vague commitments to sexual and reproductive health that can be interpreted as implying abortion rights".

Protection Against Violence: The "Agreed Conclusions" reinforce national mechanisms to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, particularly in conflict and crisis settings.

Focus on Economic and Social Rights: The Assembly called for the repeal of discriminatory laws, stronger protections for women's rights at work, and addressing structural barriers that hinder equality.

Post-pandemic/Digital Age Focus: Discussions emphasized that while women have never been closer to equality, they face a high risk of losing it due to a growing global backlash, necessitating a focus on "rights, justice and action".

Local Governance Focus: Discussions outside the main plenary emphasized that advancing women's political leadership at the local government level is a strategic necessity for democratic resilience and for translating global commitments into tangible change.

The Agreed Conclusions on CSW 70 provide a roadmap to build more inclusive governance, support peace and social cohesion, and prevent future violations against women and girls.

conclusions serve as critical reference points used to justify domestic gender policy.

The CSW concluded with a call to **"stand up, show up, and speak up" to ensure women and girls can live safely and speak freely, despite the challenging international climate.**

Last Line

This Gender Balance

The race for Gender Equity in Nigeria is a race fraught with so much hurdles and hiccups, especially, from those who you would ordinarily expect to help you on the way.

Tradition may have created the Gender gap that is deep but the ones breaking almost every attempt to narrow the gap are surprisingly, not the really uninformed and unschooled villager but the most informed, most exposed; our men who know all the arguments and have seen the world and the changes and positive developments Gender balance brings to the society

They are the men sitting at the apex of our decision making and call the shots. They plan and execute policies and reform the unfavourable old rules but their thoughts are often far from issues to advance the status of women or welcome diversity and inclusion.

Just reflect, governors who should protect the rights of women have been reported to domestically abuse their wives even whole in office. Remember James Ibori, Achike Udenwa, and Sullivan Chime. Some of the wives swallowed the scream to avoid stigmatization always running abroad to nurse their wounds and pain.

Now, revisit the Akpabio/Natashia saga in the hallowed chambers of our highest law making office. Jump to the Regina/Ned Nwoko family squabble. Recall the Nabo sales girl assault. The list is endless and happens at state and local government levels. No organization is free.

That means that every Nigerian woman has to learn to be strong because nobody or system is in place to let you in or speak up. None is there to protect you because even if we have laws like the VAPP, in a country where the Judiciary cannot uphold rights being too scared to offend the mighty, these men of power are too big to be questioned and brought to book. And when. Impunity is allowed to Reign, more women and girls suffer from abuses and deprivation. So the woman has to be strong enough not to allow your self, your conviction be swallowed by a system that has no real room for you except to drain you. The battle is tough as those who should be charged to protect women's interests are at the forefront of the Oppression determined to ensure women are silenced from every corner.

In more decent societies, a public figure who disrespects his wife or women generally, would be shamed and denied respect by the people. Not so here.

With our numerical strength and electoral relevance, we must push harder to change this narrative and make the Nigerian leaders know that we understand and care about what is happening in other places. We deserve a voice and seats in the power rooms.

This is why Ned Nwoko can shamelessly project the ugly development brewing in his bedroom. What a country! Naijaaa!!!

Women must rise above the 'victim' tag placed on them to be able to live the life of dignity they deserve which is also guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution. Every woman has a right to express herself, associate and participate in decisions about her life and family and the right to be what she wants to be. Nobody should be allowed to trample on those rights be he family, boss or pastor. Do not let marriage or office deny you these rights otherwise, you become an object and nothing more. Own your life.

STORY INTO IKUBA

Bonny Queen

Her Royal Highness, Queen Pauler Tamunoipirinye, wife of His Royal Majesty King Edward Asimini William Dappa Pepple III, Perekule XI, the Amanyanabo and Natural Ruler of the Grand Bonny Kingdom, Rivers State, Nigeria, stepped gracefully into Ikuba in a magnificent display of royal elegance and splendour during her Mgbede Ceremony.

This sacred cultural rite, deeply rooted in Ibani tradition, celebrates purity, heritage, and the enduring values of the Bonny people. Through this revered ceremony, she personified the dignity, strength, and noble virtues of Bonny royalty, reaffirming her place as a worthy custodian of the kingdom's rich cultural legacy.

Warm congratulations to the gracious and amiable Queen. #ijawheritagetv



Cont'd from page 9

Namibia: Inspiring A Continent

- Promoting Economic Inclusion: Providing targeted support for women-owned businesses and financial inclusion programs.

- Addressing Sociocultural Norms: Engaging in community-driven initiatives to challenge and change patriarchal attitudes and norms.

-Increasing Representation*: Implementing measures to increase women's representation in key leadership positions and sectors. Implementing women's leadership programs can help build a pipeline of women leaders and provide them with the skills and confidence needed to take on leadership roles.

- Financial inclusion- Increasing access to financial services, such as savings accounts, loans, and insurance, can help women manage their finances and invest in their businesses. Establishing women's cooperatives can provide a platform for women to share resources, skills, and knowledge, and collectively access markets and financial services.

- Providing training and skills development programs can help women acquire the skills and knowledge needed to participate in the economy.

- Digital literacy: Providing digital literacy training can help women access online markets, financial services, and other resources, and participate in the digital economy.

*Addressing Gender-Based Violence: Providing support services, such as counseling, healthcare, and legal aid, can help survivors of gender-based violence access the help they need.

-Community engagement: Engaging with local communities to raise awareness and challenge patriarchal attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender-based violence is essential to the equality drive.

-Increasing Representation: Providing leadership development programs can help women build the skills and confidence needed to take on leadership roles. Continuous Capacity Building for Women and girls on leadership and governance.

-Mentorship: Pairing women with experienced leaders can provide valuable guidance and support.

-Networking opportunities*: Providing networking

opportunities can help women connect with other leaders, mentors, and role models, and access opportunities for collaboration and partnership.

-Addressing Sociocultural Norms: Implementing community-based initiatives can help challenge patriarchal attitudes and norms, and promote a culture of equality and respect.

-Role models and storytelling: Highlighting successful women leaders and role models can inspire and motivate others to pursue leadership roles and challenge societal norms.

Exploring these strategies will impact both rural women and girls, leaving no one behind and stamping a mark that when women lead, nations develop peacefully and sustainably.

What then can we summarize as the key legacy from this leadership shift for the whole of Africa?

The key legacy of Namibia's leadership shift for the whole of Africa is:

- *Inspiring a New Generation*: The historic appointment of an all-female leadership team in Namibia serves as a powerful symbol of women's empowerment and leadership, inspiring a new generation of African women to pursue leadership roles.

- *Challenging Patriarchal Norms*: This leadership shift challenges entrenched patriarchal norms and stereotypes, demonstrating that women can lead effectively and make significant contributions to governance and development.

- *Promoting Gender Equality*: Namibia's example highlights the importance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in leadership positions, which can have a positive impact on development outcomes and democracy.

- *African Solutions to African Challenges*: This leadership shift showcases African women's capabilities and demonstrates that African solutions can be found to address the continent's challenges.

The overall message is that Women's Leadership Matters. Women's leadership is essential for promoting development, democracy, and gender equality in Africa.

Namibia's example shows that barriers to women's leadership can be broken down with determination, hard work, and support. This Namibian leadership shift has the potential to inspire a continent-wide movement for women's empowerment and leadership.

Rivers Deputy Governor Celebrates Daughter's Elevation As Professor



Mummy and daughter savour the moment



Prof. Ureh Annabel Oparaodu and husband arriving for the celebration



Family, friends, well wishers pose with the celebrant

Nothing gladdens the heart as much as parents witnessing the success of their children. It has been all smiles and gratitude for the Odu and Oparaodu families. Rivers State Deputy Governor, Prof. (Mrs.) Ngozi Nma Odu, has expressed deep joy and gratitude to God over the recent elevation of her second daughter, Prof. Ureh Annabel Oparaodu. She described the moment, as the fulfilment of a prophecy made by her late husband over two decades ago. The celebration also marked the new professor's birthday.

Speaking during the celebration at Galaxy La Palm in Port Harcourt on Sunday, April 12, 2026, Prof. Odu expressed excitement and humility over the remarkable achievement, stating that the family had every reason to glorify God.

She recalled that 24 years ago, before the passing of her husband, Dr. Chimdi Afukuka Odu, he had predicted that their daughter would one day become a

professor and often addressed her as "Prof."

Fulfilment of that prophesy she said, made the occasion a day of great joy for the entire family.

Prof. Odu added that although the family deeply misses her late husband, they are comforted by the fact that his dreams and expectations have come to reality.

She described her daughter as a reflection of both parents she shares her father's strength as an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) consultant and her mother's academic excellence as a professor.

Chairman of the occasion, who is also the Chief Medical Director of the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, Prof. Chizindu Alikor, extolled the trailblazing achievements of Prof. Ureh Oparaodu, particularly as the first female President of the Association of Resident Doctors, University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, where she provided outstanding leadership and inspired many young professionals.

According to him, Prof. Oparaodu's administrative excellence was further highlighted through her role in overseeing key hospital units, including the Ophthalmology and ENT centers, which were described as well-managed, clean and efficiently maintained under her supervision.

Celebrant, Prof. Ureh Annabel Oparaodu expressed deep emotions, wishing her late father, Dr. Chimdi Odu, was alive to witness the fulfilment of his words and guidance. She noted that the daughter he once inspired had not only become an ENT surgeon like him, but had also risen to the rank of professor, a double package.

AWLO Inducts Senator Ipalibo Harry Banigo Life Patroness, Sets New Tone For Rivers Chapter



Senator Ipalibo Harry-Banigo speaking after her decoration as Life Patroness



Representative of the Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, Prof Ngozi Odu (Deputy Governor) reading his address

February 28, 2026 has been penciled down as a date with history. That day, the drive for women inclusion in decision-making took three steps forward.

The African Women Leadership Organization, AWLO, a global forum seeking to truly bring women on board the public leadership train, gathered in Port Harcourt, Rivers State to induct as a life patroness, a great change maker, HE Senator Dr. Mrs. Ipalibo Harry Banigo, re-launch the AWLO Rivers State chapter and honour champions of the gender balance cause.

The thrust of the message of the personality studded event chaired by the state Deputy Governor Prof Mrs. Ngozi Ordu who represented the governor, His Excellency, Sir Siminalayi Fubara was that women must be on board for sustainable progress to be recorded in African governance. The event paid tribute to men and women pushing to elevate this dream and, challenged the Rivers State AWLO chapter to rise to make the needed difference in the society.

Representative of the Rivers State Governor and Deputy Governor of the state, Prof Mrs Ngozi Odu, lauded AWLO leadership and commended the choice of Senator Ipalibo Harry Banigo as Life Patroness noting, that she has impacted lives and contributed to positive change in society. She said the state is proud of her achievements especially, in her journey through public service.



Senator Ipalibo Harry-Banigo being decorated as Life Patroness of AWLO



Rivers State AWLO, Hon. Okorite Carrie Adiele giving her acceptance speech



Senator Ipalibo Harry-Banigo and the Deputy Governor of Rivers State, Prof. (Mrs.) Ngozi Odu representative of Governor Sim Fubara



Governor Sim Fubara's representative, Prof. (Mrs.) Ngozi Odu receives the recognition award on his behalf



Male champions honoured: He for She- Chief Nabil Saleh, CEO M. Saleh Group Nig., Amb. Dr. Clinton Fubara Snr, MD Sebatwach Group Nig., Dr. Elish Attai, AWLO founder/president representing Dr. Emmanuel Enefenim, MD Premium Trust Bank Nigeria - flanked by Prof. (Mrs.) Ngozi Odu, Senator Ipalibo Harry-Banigo and Dean of AWLO Executive Council, Theodora Ajegwu



AWLO President/AWLO Life Patroness and AWLO Dean of Executives with their badge of appreciation from Rivers State members



Exco and members of the relaunched Rivers chapter of AWLO pose with the AWLO president, international officials, Global Ambassador, Senator Ipalibo Harry-Banigo and the Rivers State Deputy Governor, Prof. (Mrs.) Ngozi Odu



AWLO Magazine unveiled



Dean of AWLO Executive Council, Dep Gov., State AWLO and AWLO Life Patroness - women of power

The Woman: H/E Senator Ipalibo Harry Banigo, AWLO Life Patroness

Global recognition comes to those who have over the years, through silent steps, built a legacy of integrity, respect and success walking through society and helping shape positive impact.

Her Excellency, Senator Ipalibo Harry-Banigo, Senator representing Rivers West Senatorial District in the Nigerian Senate and first female Deputy Governor of Rivers State, is a woman who has recorded many feats in her carrier as a professional, leader and politician, touching lives along the way and raising hope among many, especially, women.

Key areas of her impact include healthcare reform and access expansion, women and girls' empowerment, youth skills development, agricultural and small-business empowerment, public health policy and oversight.

Born on December 20, 1952 in Obuama, Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria, this Amazon began her education in the prestigious Queen's College, Lagos.

She earned her MBBS from the University College Hospital, Ibadan and obtained a Master of Public Health (MPH) from Harvard University School of Public Health.

She topped this with diplomas in Tropical Hygiene and Dermatology at the University of London.

Coming home, she served as Registrar of Births and Senior Medical Officer-in-Charge in Rivers State in the early 1980s and later became principal of the Rivers State School of Health Technology in 1985.

AWLO Global Ambassador Ipalibo rose through senior roles in the Rivers State Ministry of Health, including: Director of Public Health Services, acting Commissioner, and a Permanent Secretary.

She was appointed Secretary to the Rivers State Government (SSG) on October 5, 1995 and prior to her 2015 entry into the political space, was the first female Head of Service of the Rivers State Government.

Those years spent managing offices in the health ministry and Rivers State government service gave her a firm leadership ground for her next role when in 2015, Nyesom Wike selected her as running mate for the governorship race under the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party.

On May 29, 2015 this silent performer changed the history of political leadership in Rivers State as she emerged the first female deputy governor in the democratic history of the state. That gave impetus to more women to seek elective positions and between Governor Nyesom Wike and her, (2015-2023), the number of women in elective and appointive positions rose at all levels of government. More women groups began to take interest in government affairs and her office was their first call, being their anchor and role model. Expectedly too, issues about health especially, reproductive health and violence against women received serious attention.

It was no surprise therefore, that she was elected Senator representing Rivers West Senatorial District under the Peoples' Democratic Party and assumed office on June 13, 2023.

Senator Ipalibo Harry Banigo was appointed Chairperson, Senate Committee on Health (Secondary and Tertiary) in the 10th National Assembly.

In line with her burning desire to help transform community lives and raise self-reliance in her constituency, she recently donated mini-buses to youths in her Degema, Bonny, Akuku-Toru/Asari-Toru communities and in response to Obuama identified need, a 100 unit modern lock-



Some of the mini-buses - distributed for youth empowerment



Some of the lock-up stalls



Beneficiary receives her empowerment from Senator Ipalibo Harry Banigo



Obuama traditional ruler, others flank the Senator as she commissions the Market stalls project

up shops structure with power and sanitary facilities was built to boost economic activities there. The large turn-out for the commissioning of the projects and the respect accorded her wherever she turns up, attest to her level of impact which AWLO recognizes and is set to tap.

Interview

Chief Bridget Adaku Duru-Society Changer

Chief Bridget Adaku Duru is a woman with a great passion for the needy. The founder of NGO, Volunteer for Orphans, Youths, and Widows Empowerment, founded after years of service in the oil sector, believes that with a little care, things can be better for all.

Chief Mrs Bridget Adaku Duru is a woman of many parts, a dedicated worker, society builder, committed to helping lift souls. The ever smiling lady, **CHIEF BRIDGET ADAKU DURU-SOCIETY CHANGER** was born in Kaduna to Mr. and Mrs. Alphonsus Igweche from Awo-Omamma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. I was actually born in Kano but my dad fought in the Second World War and came back to marry my mother, a young girl. After getting married to her, he sent her to a convent school in Oguta while he went back to the warfront, later came back and wedded her in July 1956.

We left Kaduna during the Nigerian/Biafra Civil War, after the 1996 coup and came down home to the East. That was the first time we were coming down eastern Nigeria. Since we were born, we never came home and it was interesting because, we knew our village, other relatives and villages around, We were happy to be home. life was not as rosy as it used to be. Because of the way things were during the war, I know that there were raids; airplanes used to come and raid villages and some towns, so we were living in fear. I registered with the Nigerian Red Cross Association and was working with the International Red Cross then at the Awo-Omamma Community Hospital

How old were you then?

I was 17 years old. I was working there and was able to help my family and a lot of people in my community through the relief materials we were being given. However, we were not paid but at the end of every week, they will share food to compensate us for the work we were doing. I will bring it back, my mother will take her own, share with her neighbours and children there. We were able to help them. So most of them did not suffer from kwashiorkor because then, there was no salt anywhere, so it

was the stock fish that they used to bring, that had salt on it, and we were distributing to people so that they could have salt in their food. For that reason, many of the children there did not suffer from kwashiorkor.

Before the war ended, I left the Red Cross job and went to Oguta. Before then, my father actually wanted me to marry one - Mr. Barnard Amanfo, the son of our traditional leader, Mr. Amanfo, a very well-known prominent man.

But I was too young. I told my father I wasn't going to get married, that I wanted to go to school. He said I could always go to school if I get married but I said no. The man was older than me by far and I didn't have any admiration for him. My father wasn't very happy. He wanted to be the in-law of a very prominent person.

“ I was actually born in Kano but my dad fought in the Second World War and came back to marry my mother, a young girl. After getting married to her, he sent her to a convent school in Oguta while he went back to the warfront, later came back and wedded her in July 1956. ”

I told him that I wasn't going to succumb to that pressure. He said that as long as he was alive, I was going to marry that man. What I did was to pack my things and leave for my grandmother's place to live with her. I never came back.

Later, we had an occasion in Oguta where I met Mr Samuel Ekezie, a naval officer. We fell in love and before you knew it, the war ended. As soon as the war ended, I went to school at Aba.-Wilcox Memorial Grammar School. I was living with my cousin Jude Ojiakor. Second year, there was no money for school fees anymore and during that time, I had to visit my then boyfriend, Samuel. By the time I came back, I noticed I was pregnant and the man's family so loved me because he was an only son. His father had four other wives but his mother had one boy and three



Chief Bridget Adaku Duru

girls. So they were hoping to get a male child, luckily for them, when I delivered on October 23, 1971, it was a baby boy. The whole village was jubilating. They treated me like a queen; they couldn't believe that it was happening. Everybody was happy. My mum came from the *omugo*. Later, everything became normal and Samuel left for Benin to go and work with Mandilas. Then I said I would not be there waiting for him so, I had to come to Port Harcourt through one of my sisters-in-law (May her soul rest in peace), Fanny Ekezie.

Where did you leave the baby?

I left him with my mother-in-law. She was capable, young and able to take care of my son. I came to Port Harcourt.

At that point, I met one Mr Victor Kolade, a Yoruba man who was working in the Nigeria Agip Oil Company. I told him I wanted to work in Agip, that I don't want to work in an oil servicing company because I learnt that they pay better than oil companies. After two weeks, he invited me for an interview and, I was lucky. As soon as I went for the interview, the results came and I passed. They employed me. That was how I found myself in the Nigeria Agip Oil Company.

What Year?

That was 1975. I was employed as a typist. I worked for two years-1975-1977

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then told them I want to go to the university. While I was working, I sent money and provisions to my mother-in-law to take care of my son and I was helping them. When I said I wanted to go to the university, my parents said I should wait a little bit. I said no there is no time to waste now, that I have the mind to go to school. I went to the university, one Mr. Adeniran, a lecturer with the Rivers State University of Technology now Rivers State University, was instrumental to my getting the admission. What happened was that because I had a merit in Maths and Secretarial Administration, instead of four years HND, they gave me three years. I started from year two- they gave me exemption. And as God may have it, while in school, on long vacations, I would go to Agip to work to be able to earn some money before going back to school. Luckily for me, after the three year programme, I came out with Upper Credit and had to proceed to Lagos for my NYSC. At first they posted me to Jos but I did not want Jos. I wanted Lagos where I would be in the oil company. I went to the NYSC Secretariat in Jos and told them I was married and needed to be with my family and they sent me back to Lagos. When I came back to Lagos, I went to my company. They accepted me and allowed me to serve with them. After the NYSC, they now employed me as a secretary.

So, you joined Agip from Lagos?

I joined them from Lagos, second journey. I was in Lagos from 1984 to 1985 when they transferred me back to Port Harcourt because the company was transferring workers to its new headquarters. I was happy doing my job

As God would have it, I found favour with almost all my bosses. Anybody that worked with me would like to work with me. First, I worked as assistant secretary to the Project Manager, an Italian. When he left, another person took over and he recommended me to the new boss, that he



Chief Bridget Adaku Duru

should not allow them to redeploy me but kept me in the department; that I was very efficient. I was there until one day, the operational manager said he needed a secretary and they checked all the secretaries around, I was the only one who had an HND and I knew the job. So they recommended me to work with the operations manager, another promotion for me. I worked with the operations manager for about three years then the General Manager, Mr Sylvester Uwaechie needed a secretary. I don't know what happened or what the secretary did, they said they don't want her again. The General Manager just told my boss that he needed me to come and start working with him. That was how I became the General Manager's secretary and I worked and everything was okay.

When I was working with him I met my husband, Dr Emmanuel Duru in his cousin's house at GRA. He was a lecturer in the University of Port Harcourt. I went there with my mum to see them while he came to bring back children who went on holiday. My sister-in-law, Lolo Victoria Ekezie now told him, 'This lady is from our place and works with Agip'. As soon as he saw me he got interested in me and we got talking. That was all.

Next weekend he came to my house. I was surprised. I didn't know he had collected my address from Sister Victoria informing her that he wanted my hand in marriage.

He told me about his life, in Moscow, that his European wife left because she couldn't cope with Nigeria's economic situation as she found it difficult to adapt and asked for divorce and he divorced her. He said he wanted to marry me. At that age, I wanted to get married. I said

married. They (Dr. Duru's people) did everything. Usually, in the Catholic Church, before you get married they have the bans of marriage that will be announced at least three months before you get married. When we came there, I told him that we have to follow the process. He said no, that we can talk to the Bishop. I was saying that even though, I also knew the Bishop, people in the village might say we needed to follow the rule. We went to Bishop Fitzgibbon, Bishop of the Port Harcourt Diocese at that time, who said we didn't need any ban that we could wed. He used his power and he wedded us on December 19, 1987. That was how I got married to him. For the 25 years of our marriage, we were living peacefully. The marriage was blessed with five children- Chinedu, Nnamdi, Chinenyenwa, Ifeanyi and Nneka. Everything went well until he died in 2012 of

“ So far, VOYE has been able to establish contacts in Imo, Anambra, Delta States, with head office in Rivers State... Right now, our plan is to teach youths and widows to really learn skills like soap, detergent making, do it well and people will buy. That way, they will have money to take care of themselves and family. ”

maybe this is the right man. That was October 1987.

You were what age then?

Thirty five (35). He proposed and I accepted. He told me he wanted to go to my village that weekend but I told him to wait till the next weekend when I would accompany him. The next weekend we travelled home and met my father. My father was very happy to meet him, my mother, everybody was happy. He told my father and my uncles that he came to know what it would take to marry me.

He went home and returned two weeks later with his people for a big traditional marriage rite. Everybody was surprised. They never saw me courting, only saw me getting

leukemia and I had to, after the mourning, answer my son's invitation to come over to the US for some time. But I was still visiting until I finally became an American citizen. While there, I was doing volunteer works to keep myself busy in order not to be idling about.

You had your first son very early.

At 19.

You must have encountered some pressures?

Eeh, I was able to cope because when you are in an environment where people accept you, it makes life easier. I wasn't in my home but I was feeling at home. One of the reasons was because my

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mother-in-law was very nice. She was a very kind woman who didn't disturb; she will just say, "Bi, Bi". My name was just like a household name. They were really nice and I showed interest. When they were going to the farm even though I had never farmed before, I followed them to the farm. I learnt how to farm. All the time we were in the North we never knew anything about farming. They would go to the farm, weed, plant, harvest, peel cassava, come and prepare it for garri. I was adapting to their way of life and that made her to be very happy.

Your being a volunteer during the civil war, what was it like?

It was not easy oo! It was not easy because we had to attend to wounded soldiers and most of them were amputees with their legs up. They will want to use the toilet, they could not get up. You had to get head pan for them, empty and wash it and even in the morning, I would get up, give them a bath, clean them up, make their beds and feed some of them. We used to rotate from ward to ward; sometimes they sent us to the theatre or to go and work in the casualty ward. We were usually on standby in case of emergency.

You were not afraid?

I wasn't afraid. The only thing was that sometimes, Nigerian fighters used

to come and throw bombs. Luckily for us, they never threw bomb on the Nigerian Red Cross.

Where was that?

In Awo-Omamma

That hospital is still there?

Yes it is still there. It is now a general hospital. It was only one day that they threw bomb, not in the hospital, but in the staff quarter near the hospital; one day only. That was the first time. They threw bomb and they killed about three persons. They never came again. They would however, come, hover and hover, sometimes you think they were going to throw bomb but they would not attack the hospital. I am sure they were obeying the international law.

Keeping the civilian spaces safe

Yes.

You were married for 25 years. What things did you learn about marriage from those 25 years?

Well, what I learnt is that for you to be happily married, your husband has to be your friend, your confidante and your husband at the same time. And you must have mutual respect for one another. Like, my husband sometimes, we agree to disagree so we did not have any serious quarrel any day. What I know is that you have to respect one another and you don't have to allow any stranger into your relationship. Whatever you are having in your home, let it be in your home, don't go

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Whatever you are having in your home, let it be in your home, don't go and discuss your affairs with outsiders because you don't know those who are envying you. Make sure you keep it in your home unless it is something good that you want people to know about.
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and discuss your affairs with outsiders because you don't know those who are envying you. Make sure you keep it in your home unless it is something good that you want people to know about.

Anything that is like a problem that you are facing, don't discuss with anybody. If you must discuss, maybe you have a sponsor in the marriage, you can go to your sponsor to say, "Look at what is happening". Their own is to advise you

and guide you and normally, they do it very well. For you to get a sponsor in a marriage is not easy. That person has taken a vow to make sure that that marriage survives and works.

At 35 you had a good job. Usually, you have pressure from parents, society-you never marry? What are you waiting for? What will you tell young women and girls facing that kind of situation?

My advice actually, is this, don't allow any person to influence you and don't listen to gossip because when you begin to listen to gossips, you get confused yourself. Know what you want and go for it because nothing that is good comes easy. You have to give something to get something. That's my advice and then, you have to respect everybody; don't think that because you are in a better position now, you can look down on people. No! You have to respect everybody because those you meet when you are going up, you will surely meet when you are coming down. So, anywhere you find yourself, make sure that you have mutual respect for everybody both small and big because respect is reciprocal.

What are your work principles like?

In the first place, my work principle is punctuality. Agip resumes 7.30 am, but for me, 7.00am, I was in the office. I never recorded coming to work late for one day. Usually, when you come to work late, first of all, they would give you query, it goes into your file. At the end of the year, when they would do your appraisal, it would surface. So, I made sure that I was always punctual at work and when there was need for overtime, I would do the overtime.

Know when to say no and when to say yes. Deal diplomatically with a difficult person. Don't take advantage of peoples' situations or somebody is looking for your trouble then you go and start fomenting trouble, No! Study those around you, what they like and what they don't like, respect them and you will find that things will go easily for you.

You had a successful career life. Beyond punctuality what are some of the things that helped you?

Apart from punctuality, I had good relationship with my colleagues and helped bring about some changes to improve our work as secretaries which made them see me as one listening to them and championing their cause.

One problem women have is how to manage work and family. How did you manage leaving to be in the office

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by 7am meaning that you have to do extra work at home. How did you cope?

Well, I was able to cope because I planned very well. What I did was that first of all, when we got married, my husband was only living with the son. I got a cook because I knew that food is important in the house. I got a very talented and good cook to make sure that as I leave early, before I even get ready, I made sure that there would be food in the house. We planned very well. We sat down and planned the menu for the week and all I needed to do was give him the money. All my husband knew was that whenever he came back, his food was there, Nnamdi came back, he had his food. And to take care of the environment, we had a gardener who was taking care of the compound so, I didn't have much problem as everything was based on planning. When I had my two other children, we engaged two nannies who took care while I was at work. Everything was in order and luckily for us, the children grew into good children. They did well in their Secondary School Certificate Exam and as God would have it, their elder brother, Chinedu filed for me to become an American resident which was approved. As soon as it was approved, I applied for them and their papers were authorized and the visa was also granted. I took them to America in 2016, they are all there now. Chichi, the girl is now married with two children while Ifeanyi is working in San Francisco Nnamdi is doing well here and married with three children. I have eight good children.

Wow! What will you tell women about building themselves up financially? How did you build?

The only thing I want to tell my fellow women about finance is that once you are in a marriage, let your money be your husband's money, let your husband's money be your money. For instance, when my husband met me, I was earning more than him because he was a lecturer. I knew how much they were paid. He showed me his pay slips when he brings it, I just laugh.

So, the good thing is that whatever you have belongs to both of you. Maybe, God is using you to bless the family.

You don't have to be stingy or for instance, you have a problem to solve financially, you know that your husband does not have that type of money and you have, then you keep quiet. You want him to go and borrow outside? That is not fair now! No, the money is for everybody, as long as you manage it judiciously so that you do not lack.

I know that you have a soft spot for helping people and you even have a charity organization. What is the driving force?

By nature, when I look at you, I can tell whether you need help or not and I don't have to wait for you to ask me to, I will volunteer what I know I can do for you. Most of the

people are receptive, when you give them a helping hand they accept. You know some people may have but will not want to give, rather they want you to beg and some may be in need but will not want to beg. They will say let them die in their poverty.

Tell us about your charity organization

All my life I have always had a strong passion for the needy. When I retired from service, I said, what am I going to do? One mind said business, another said you like helping why don't you set up an NGO where you will be able to help as many people as possible. I said fine. I discussed this with my husband who said okay if you have the money. I said just support me first. I have made up my mind and that is what I want to do. I consulted my friend Constance. We put our heads together. She actually designed the name-**Volunteers for Orphans, Youths and Widows Empowerment, VOYE** and to ring a bell. We registered the organization with the Corporate Affairs

Commission and started our projects on skill acquisition, health and education matters,, helping the poor. And so far, we have been able to save lives, address infrastructure decay in some community schools, empower over 200 youths and widows for self-reliance. We have also established contacts in Imo, Anambra, Delta States with Port Harcourt as head office. We have been able to use our resources to help the needy as indicated in our objectives and we are working on it.

What are your plans right now?

Right now, the first thing among what we plan to do by God's grace is to bring some youths and women, empower them as we did before but this time, get experts who can teach them how to acquire skills like soap making, find out what it will cost, pay and they learn this skill very well to help them gain financial independence.

Because people are using soap, detergent so if we can get them to learn this skill very well, it will help. Nigeria is a big nation, once you package something like soap-liquid, detergent or tablet- very well, if it is good, people will buy. Then for the children in school, if we are able to offset some of the school fees, and if we have enough money, buy book and distribute to them.

For the widows (most of them are looking for loan) we don't have enough money for loan but if God blesses us and we get enough money as we are expecting, we will be able to finance some of these widows who, are looking for money to start one business or the other but don't have the capital. Our focus is on making life easier for the vulnerable ones in society. We must acknowledge those who believe in our cause and have supported us along the line we are grateful and look forward to more resources to enable us do more.

That is a noble cause, changing society from your own end. Well done. It has been a pleasure chatting with you.



Chief Bridget Adaku Duru

“ My advice actually, is this, don't allow any person to influence you and don't listen to gossip because when you begin to listen to gossips, you get confused yourself.. Know what you want and go for it because nothing that is good comes easy. You have to give something to get something. ”

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Women We Honour

Waris Dirie: She cleaned floors at McDonald's. five years later, she was on the cover of Vogue. Then she walked away from fame to save millions of girls.



Waris Dirie

This is Waris Dirie and her story is not a fairy tale. It's a reckoning.

Somalia, 1965. Waris was born 1905 into a nomadic family of 12 children crossing one of the harshest deserts on Earth. There was no running water, no electricity. Survival dictated everything.

Her name meant "desert flower," a plant that blooms where life isn't supposed to.

At five years old, Waris was subjected to female genital mutilation.

There was no anesthesia, no sterile tools, just pain, blood and silence.

Girls died from it. Her sister did. So did her cousins. Those who survived carry the wounds forever physical and psychological.

Waris survived.

At 13, her father announced she would be married to a man old enough to be her grandfather. The bride price: five camels.

That night, her mother helped her escape.

A child fled alone across the desert, no map, no money, no protection, just instinct and courage.

She made it to Mogadishu. Then to London taken by an uncle as an unpaid maid. She didn't speak English. She couldn't read. She was trapped.

When he returned to Somalia, Waris stayed behind, illegally.

She rented a bed at the YMCA and cleaned floors at McDonald's. She took night classes, learned to read and write as an adult. She was eighteen and starting from zero.

Then, in 1987, a stranger walked into that McDonald's.

Fashion photographer Terence Donovan saw her face and history shifted.

Within months, Waris Dirie went from mopping floors to walking the world's most exclusive runways, Chanel, L'Oréal, Levi's, Revlon, Vogue, Elle, Glamour, et el.

She became the first black woman in an Oil of Olay campaign, a bond girl. One of the most recognizable models on Earth.

She came from nowhere to everywhere, but behind the beauty was pain that no spotlight could erase. In 1997, at the peak of her career, a journalist asked for her "Cinderella story."

Waris said no. Instead, she told the truth. She spoke publicly for the first time about female genital mutilation. About what had been done to her. About what was still being done to 8,000 girls every single day.

The world froze. The interview detonated globally. Barbara Walters placed it on front pages. There was international outrage. For the first time, FGM had a face people couldn't ignore.

That same year, the United Nations appointed Waris Dirie Special Ambassador for the Elimination of FGM.

And then she did something radical. She quit modeling at

the height of her fame and at the peak of money. She walked away, because saving lives mattered more than selling beauty.

Her memoir, *Desert Flower*, sold over 11 million copies worldwide. Her foundations built schools, clinics and medical centers for survivors. Girls received surgery, therapy, safety.

Countries changed laws. Courts delivered convictions. Rates of FGM plummeted across Africa and Europe.

When Waris began speaking, 130 million women and girls had already endured FGM.

Today, thanks to activists like her, the practice is globally recognized for what it is: a human rights violation. Millions of girls have been spared. Waris Dirie didn't just survive trauma. She turned pain into protection, silence into law, suffering into salvation.

She bloomed in a desert and made sure other girls would live to bloom too. Not as victims, but as whole, powerful, unbroken women. Waris Dirie. Her face sold magazines. Her voice changed the world.

Prof. Nnenna Otti: Woman Of Great Courage



Prof Nnenna Otti

Prof Nnenna Otti, first female Vice Chancellor of the Federal University Owerri, FUTO, gave hope to Nigerians at a moment disillusion heightened in the country. As the state electoral returning officer for Abia State in the 2023 Elections, this Afipko born mother of three who had made her mark in academics, jettisoned bribes, threats, intimidation to stand against fraud. She declared in the face of odds, that the peoples votes must count and announced the right candidate the winner of the Abia State 2023 Governorship Election.

For that courage to uphold integrity in a country where even the judiciary has succumbed, Prof Nnenna Oti has helped Abia rebuild the tears and wounds of years of bad governance. The peoples choice, Governor Otti is making the difference, bringing real dividends of democracy to the people and Nigerians have written her name in gold. We celebrate her.

Still A Lot More To Be Done

- Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwosa Aladeselu

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Dr. Nosakhare Ikponwosa Aladeselu

who are supporting that this problem in Nigeria, but it is getting too long, let's change and see what a woman can do. There are many men and the number of such men is growing by the day. So, we need to tell the young women that if they are able to push, they will get the support in future.

And to those campaigning for more female inclusion? What are some of the things you think that we need to do which we are

not yet doing?

For those of us fighting outside the political ring for women inclusion, we are not well served with the right information. Therefore, we are not using the right information, we are not using the right tools to get our advocacy through. I just gave you an example of zoning, if we don't understand the zoning in the political realm and we are supporting a woman against the tide, we will say Ooh, our advocacy did not work. So those of us who are outside (that was what took me into politics,) I was still in the activism and they said, go inside. The women were telling me, You are always saying women are not trying, the women are not pushing, they are only dancing, clapping. You, come inside'. I said if you ask me to come, I will come. That was why I entered politics in 2003 and today, what I know in politics with my activism, the person who is the president of

one NGO or one international NGO, does not have it.

We need to connect with women who are in politics to understand both the language, the intricacies and the dos and don'ts. Oftentimes, they say we use language that some men don't like to hear; we need to be sensitive in our language. We also need to be sensitive in our demands **and also be sure that what we are asking for is in the interest of the people we are working for. Often, we fight for people without asking them, what do you want? Until we go dig gamu halfway you hear, se no send am, na your side we dey o!.** So, there is need for synergy between those who are advocating for inclusiveness outside politics to connect with knowledgeable women in the polity-women who have tried, some have failed, some have succeeded. You need to tap from their experiences, from

become more and more relevant to the needs of their immediate environment. A woman who wants to be a councilor in a ward, that is the smallest political unit which, is also winnable, must be identified by men and women from the ward for her personal resourcefulness. You may not give them money but you can give them your time. If you don't have time, you can rally around some people to also provide their time to address their needs and source help for them outside. Once they connect you with one benefit, by the time you print your poster, they will campaign for you. That is what we have seen over the years and we expect that for more and more women to become active in politics, they should first all bend down to carry the load before asking for help so that people will help them to put it on their heads. They must develop themselves, must

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Democracy will not make sense until everybody has the wherewithal to raise their voices. How can you raise your voice when it is against the person who is feeding your family?
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their wisdom, from their failures before you set your own agenda.

That is very fine because, even in ordinary NGO work, if you go to a community and you decide their problem for them, the objective from Abuja, you may be making a huge mistake. We did not talk about visibility. Let us quickly talk about visibility because we want them to come in but, beyond money and a political party, there are things that women should do for themselves.

In the Asaba meeting, I encouraged women who want to take part in politics to

understand their terrain, must have what it takes, must have the poise-when they appear in public, so that people will be able to respect them. Women must be sociable, respectful-that's what local people enjoy-respect, integrity, dignity, sensitivity. If you are able to connect with them in that wise, they will project you.

Some elections are won not with money but with connection. Have you not heard sometimes in a whole state, one information will just go round-no, we are not voting for this, this is the person we are voting for? That was how Labour Party won in Edo State (2023).

Sky-Scrappers

Northern Nigeria's First Female Commodore



Rear Admiral Jamila Abubakar Sadiq Malafa (rtd.)

Meet Jamila Abubakar Sadiq Malafa (rtd.), born in 1965 in Whona village in Gombi Local Government Area of Adamawa State. She's an international maritime lawyer and the first female Northern Nigerian to attain the prestigious rank of Commodore in

the Nigerian Navy.

She obtained her Bachelor of Law degree and later earned a Master's in Constitutional and Criminal Law from the University of Lagos in 2004. Her quest for knowledge led her further to the International Maritime Law Institute in Malta, where she graduated in 2009 with a Master's in International Maritime Law.

In December 2017, history was made when Jamila Abubakar Sadiq Malafa was decorated with the rank of Commodore, a position equivalent to Brigadier General in the Army. She was later promoted to the Rank of Rear Admiral in December 2022 and retired in March 2023.

NIGERIAN AIR FORCE CELEBRATES FIRST FEMALE FIGHTER PILOT

History has been made as the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has officially celebrated its first-ever female fighter pilot. This incredible achievement marks a major milestone for women in the military and for the entire nation.

The talented Flight Lieutenant has earned her wings after years of hard work and intense training. Her success serves as an inspiration to young girls across the country, proving that with dedication, they can reach the highest heights in any career.

A Woman Joins The Air Space Battle

A new airline, Binani Air kicked off commercial operations in Nigeria, year with initial routes covering Anambra, Lagos, Kano, Maiduguri, and Port Harcourt.

The airline owned by one of our sisters, received its Air Operating Certificate (AOC) in July 2024.

The airline is owned by Senator Aishatu Binani, the richest woman in Adamawa State and the North East. She also owns the biggest printing press in the North.

Binani Air is the first airline in Nigeria owned by a woman, a historic landmark for the country and a message to the girl child that the days of barriers in career pursuit are over.

Binani Air also has a female CEO, Aminatu Dahiru Chiroma, making it the first airline in the country with a female owner and a female CEO.

The airline according to *Business Slider*, "is the physical manifestation of a dream first kindled in the heart of a young girl who grew up watching planes disappear into the Yola sky".

AmazonaAfrica is wishing Binani Airlines smooth sail and huge success.



Senator Aishatu Binani

Silent Change Maker

Change doesn't just happen. People make it happen and you don't have to be great, rich or powerful to bring about change from a small corner, you can work to change society like Oseola McCarty.

She never chased wealth. She never chased recognition. She never chased a life larger than her means. And somehow, by refusing all of that, she left behind something larger than most fortunes ever could. **Her name was Oseola McCarty.**

She was born in 1908 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA at a time when Black women were expected to give everything and receive very little in return. Her childhood did not come with promises. It came with responsibility. When she was still a young girl, she left school in the sixth grade to care for a sick aunt. Education ended early, not because she lacked ability, but because family came first. In the Jim Crow South, that was not unusual. Dreams were often interrupted so survival could continue.

Oseola never went back to school.

Instead, she went to work.

She began washing clothes for white families, scrubbing by hand in Mississippi heat that pressed down on the body like a weight. There were no washing machines. No shortcuts. Just tubs of water, soap, aching arms, and time. Wash. Rinse. Wring. Hang. Repeat. She did this work day after day, year after year, for more than seventy-five years.

It was not glamorous work. It was invisible work. The kind of labor people rely on but rarely respect. And yet, Oseola treated it with dignity. She showed up. She did it well. She charged fair prices. And she paid herself something many people never think to offer: **discipline.**

She lived alone in a small house. She fixed what broke instead of replacing it. She walked when she could. She cooked simply. She did not borrow money. She did not gamble. She did not complain. She saved.

Not for vacations.

Not for luxury.

Not for comfort in old age.

She saved because she believed in being prepared.

In a world that constantly told Black women they were disposable, Oseola practiced care as resistance. Every dollar she earned mattered. Some went to necessities. A little went into a savings account. Then a little more. Then more again. Quietly. Patiently. Without anyone watching. Without applause. Without a plan for recognition.

She did this for decades.

And then, at 87 years old, she made a decision that startled the country.

Oseola McCarty walked into the University of Southern Mississippi and donated \$150,000 - nearly everything she had saved over her lifetime. She did not want her name on a building. She did not want to be celebrated. She did not ask for power or prestige.

She said she wanted young people to have the education she never had.

That was her reason.

One woman. One savings account. One lifetime of quiet discipline.

The nation took notice.

Her gift sparked something larger than she ever intended.

Matching donations followed. Foundations stepped in. Public support grew. What began as one woman's savings multiplied into millions of dollars for scholarships, opening doors for students who might otherwise never have stepped through them?

Oseola McCarty did not change the world by accumulating more.

She changed it by giving everything she had built carefully, slowly, and without expectation.

She redefined wealth.

She showed that impact does not require excess. That generosity does not require abundance. That legacy does not need noise. Sometimes it looks like a woman washing clothes in the heat, saving a little at a time, and deciding after a lifetime of giving labor that she would give hope instead.

She once said she didn't feel like she had done anything special.

But history knows better.

Because Black history is not only written by leaders, movements, and moments of spectacle. It is also written by ordinary people who live extraordinary values consistently, even when no one is watching.

Oseola McCarty washed other people's clothes by hand.

She saved quietly.

She gave almost everything away.

And in doing so, she left behind a truth that still challenges us:

Impact doesn't require excess.

Only intention.

- Facebook.com



Oseola McCarty

WEDDING BELLS AND ALL

When the year folds or opens, wedding bells ring all over. Old unions are revisited. That is just what AmazonaAfrica lens captured. Here is to a continuous flow of the spirit of love and togetherness.

For our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora, weddings are opportunities to unite and bond. That was the case as Tracey Nwabuokei and Ben Umoren and said “I do” to the nuptial vows. Family members, friends from far and near joined in the UK to celebrate the union and share some home news, no doubt.



The new couple and family members

Chukwuemeka Isreal Uneanya tied the knot with his sweetheart Chinyemma Worlu December 27, 2025 in Port Harcourt. Family, friends and colleagues were on hand to celebrate with the couple.



Emeka and wife pose with his boss, Dr. Emem Okon (1st left)

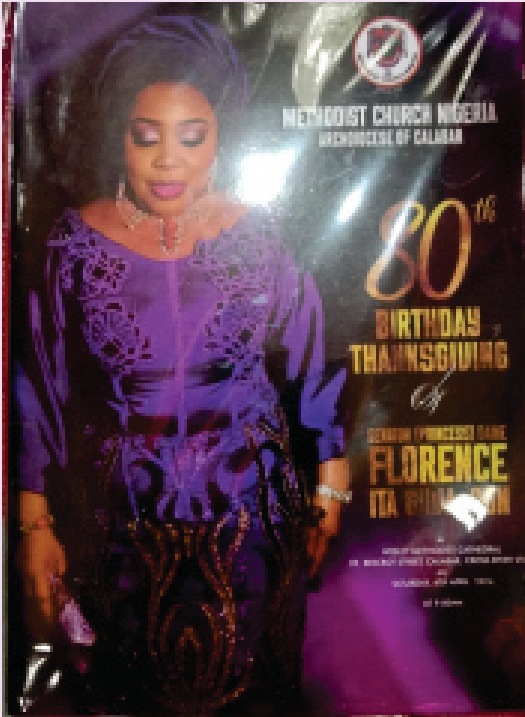
Prof. Max Meju, first right, wife Chinoye pose with Mr. Collins and Mitchell Akunwa



Respected elder statesman, former deputy governor of Rivers State and his beloved missing rib, Dame Dr Christy Toby, every youthful looking pillar of the Girls Guide in Rivers State cum respected educationist continue to shine the light as they celebrated 60 years of togetherness in marriage. The high-power celebration drew the cream of society in the state and beyond. The deputy Governor of Rivers State, Prof. (Mrs.) Ngozi Odu poses with the inspirational couple.

Aunties, family members of the bride

HONOUR A ROLE MODEL, GREAT MENTOR



Senator Princess Florence Ita-Giwa, 80, a major milestone



At the Thanksgiving Service appreciating God for a month-long birthday anniversary



Some of the Efik Kingdom women pose with their revered leader

Ekon Ibin Essien Efik, Duop-Eba, Senator Florence Ita-Giwa, astute business woman and politician, role model and mentor, shook Calabar with back-to-back celebrations that lasted for one month as she turned 80. Women of Efik kingdom joined in honouring this Amazon with a reception on Thursday, April 2, 2026.



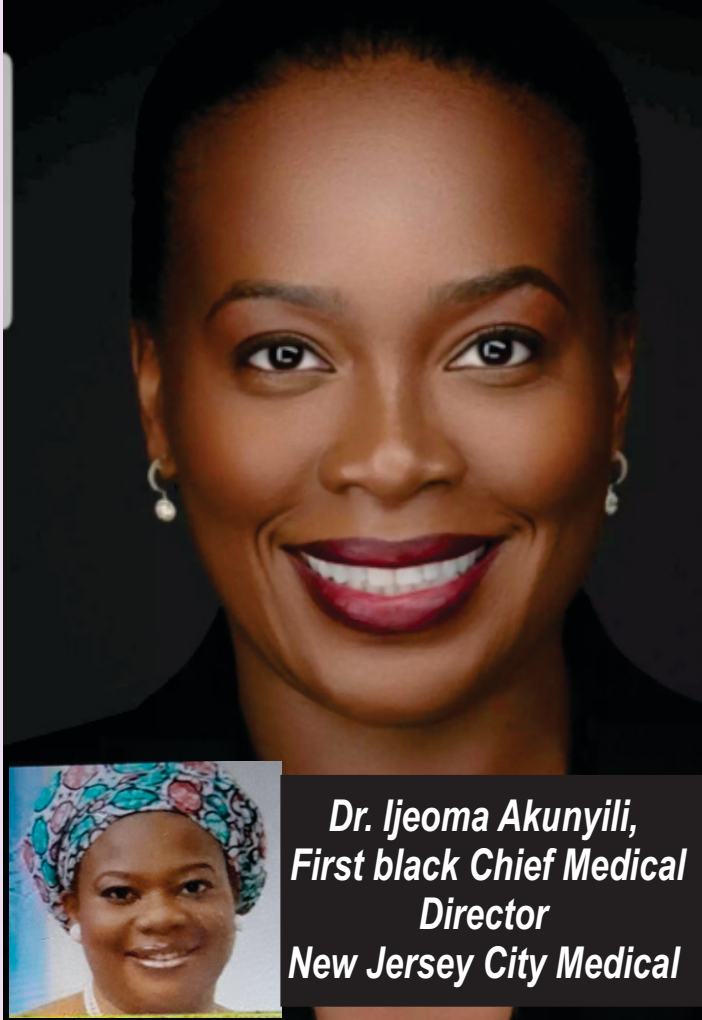
Senator Princess Florence Ita-Giwa appreciating the women's solidarity



A bevy of Calabar women of great exploits

Mother's Legacy

Dora Akunyili's Daughter Breaks Medical Jinx In US



**Dr. Ijeoma Akunyili,
First black Chief Medical
Director
New Jersey City Medical**

late Prof. Dora Akunyili

Dr. Ijeoma Akunyili, daughter of the late Professor Dora Akunyili, renowned for her role as the NAFDAC director general and Nigeria's Information minister, broke a jinx in US medical history. She became the first Black Chief Medical Officer at Jersey City Medical Center in the USA. Appointed in January 2023, she leads the RWJ Barnabas Health facility, bringing extensive experience in managing multi-specialty physician groups and Emergency Medicine.

She is the first Black physician to hold this position in the hospital's history since 1882.

Dr. Ijeoma has a strong medical background, having previously served as the Regional Medical Director of Emergency Medicine at Team Health in the USA. She is also recognized as a leader with expertise in health systems.

Dr. Ijeoma Akunyili's appointment was widely celebrated as a milestone for leadership diversity and a continuation of her mother's legacy of excellence.

In a statement released on the official website of the centre, Dr. Akunyili is the first African American medical professional to serve in the role. In his comment, the MD, Executive Vice President/Chief Medical and Quality Officer at WJ Barnabas, Dr. Andy Anderson, said Ijeoma's "experience managing multi-specialty physician groups in integrated health care systems will help support Jersey City Medical Center in providing comprehensive health care throughout the community."

"She has a wealth of experience and knowledge, and as our Chief Medical Officer, we look forward to creating a world-class experience for every patient at Jersey City Medical Center. I am confident that Hudson County will benefit in a great way from

Hugging the Spotlight Together



Malia and Sasha Obama (stand) Michelle and Barack Obama

It was a family moment no one expected. Both Obama daughters were on the spotlight, March 17, 2026, while mum, Michelle Obama fought back the tears.

The hall fell silent the moment Michelle Obama's two daughters stepped into the warm stage lights. No grand announcement, no dramatic entrance just Malia and Sasha Obama standing side by side.

Below the stage, the parents, Michelle and Barack Obama sat quietly, watching.

Malia spoke first, steady and thoughtful, like someone opening the beginning of a story.

Sasha continued, calm and sincere. Her words carried a quiet warmth that slowly filled the room.

Then Sasha stepped a little closer to the edge of the stage and the entire hall seemed to exhale.

Before they even finished what they came to say, people in the audience were already wiping their eyes.

Below the stage, Michelle gently wiped away tears in a way few had ever seen before, while daddy, Barack sat silently beside her, his eyes soft as he watched his daughters standing together.

It didn't feel like a speech. It felt like a family standing together to say something that mattered while their parents listened quietly from below the stage. A rare moment in history only made possible by the fact that greatness grows and produces greatness.

INVISIBLE LEADER



Eunice Hunton Carter

They looked at her and decided she did not belong. A Black woman. Quiet. Sitting alone in a courtroom built to exclude her. They thought she was invisible. That mistake cost America's most powerful mobster his freedom.

1936. New York City lived in fear of one man. Lucky Luciano controlled the streets, the money, and the police who were supposed to stop him. The Five Families answered to him. His empire generated millions. Prosecutors failed. Investigators stalled. Witnesses disappeared.

Luciano was untouchable. Then there was Eunice Hunton Carter. She was born in Atlanta in 1899, into a country that made it clear early that Black life was expendable. When Eunice was seven years old, white mobs tore through her city during the 1906 Race Riot. Black businesses were burned to the ground. Black families were hunted. Black bodies were left in the streets.

Her family fled north with thousands of others, joining the Great Migration in search of safety that the South refused to offer. Eunice carried those memories with her. Not as fear, but as fuel.

She learned early that survival was not enough. She wanted justice.

By 1921, Eunice Hunton Carter had already done what few women could. She earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree from Smith College in just four years. She could have stopped there. She did not.

She set her sights on the law in a nation that did not want women practicing it and absolutely did not want Black women anywhere near power.

In 1932, she became the first Black woman to graduate from Fordham Law School. In 1933, she passed the New York State Bar. Her reward was silence. Law firms refused to interview her.

Doors closed without explanation. Respectable offices pretended she did not exist.

The message was simple. You have no place here. So Eunice created one.

In 1935, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia appointed her as a prosecutor in what was called women's court. Prostitution cases. Minor offenses. A professional dead end. It was meant to keep her contained.

Busy. Harmless.

They underestimated her.

Day after day, Eunice sat in that courtroom watching the same names appear. The same lawyers. The same bail bondsmen. The same women cycling in and out from Harlem to Brooklyn to Manhattan. Everyone else saw chaos. Eunice saw design.

This was not random. Someone was organizing it.

When Special Prosecutor Thomas E. Dewey assembled his elite task force known as the Twenty Against the Underworld, Eunice was the only Black person on the team. The only woman. They assigned her what they believed was meaningless work. Prostitution complaints. Paper. Interviews no one respected.

Eunice listened. She built an index of every brothel in New York City. She read records others ignored. She spoke to women the system treated as disposable. She noticed one lawyer who appeared everywhere. His name was Abe Karp. He represented prostitutes across the entire city.

Karp was not the power. He was the door. Behind him stood Lucky Luciano. Luciano had rebuilt organized crime like a corporation.

Prostitution was his financial backbone. Reliable. Quiet. Profitable. Eunice brought the evidence to Dewey. He hesitated. Prostitution did not look big enough to destroy a kingpin.

Eunice did not hesitate.

On February 1, 1936, police raided dozens of brothels at the same time under her coordination. Over one hundred arrests. And something dangerous happened.

The women talked.

They testified that Luciano forced them to surrender half their earnings. Refusal meant violence. Escape was impossible. This was compulsory prostitution. Slavery wearing a modern suit.

The trial began in May. Armed guards lined the courthouse. Hundreds packed the gallery. Newspapers called it the Trial of the Century. Dewey stood at the podium. Cameras followed him.

History positioned him for greatness.

And Eunice Carter, the architect of the case, was not allowed to speak in court.

She sat in the audience.

She prepared witnesses behind the scenes. She arranged protection for women whose lives were in danger. She held the case together while the spotlight pointed elsewhere.

On June 6, 1936, Lucky Luciano was convicted on sixty two charges and sentenced to thirty to fifty years in prison.

The most powerful mobster in America fell because a Black woman paid attention when no one else did.

It was Eunice Carter's case.

She did not stop there. She went on to lead the largest bureau in the prosecutor's office. She advised the United Nations. She worked internationally to advance women's rights. She never demanded credit. She never chased applause.

She simply kept opening doors that were never meant to exist.

Eunice Hunton Carter died in 1970 at age seventy. For decades, history erased her.

When HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* portrayed a character inspired by her, critics called it unrealistic. A Black woman prosecutor in the 1930s dismantling the mob sounded impossible to them.

They were wrong.

In 2018, her grandson, Yale Law professor Stephen L. Carter, restored her story with the book *Invisible*. Today, institutions that once shut her out finally speak her name.

Eunice Carter taught America a truth it still struggles to accept.

Power does not always announce itself.

Revolutions are not always loud.

And the most dangerous person in the room is not always the one at the podium.

Raising Successful Kids

The joy of parenthood lies in raising successful children. Faced with the pressures of work and societal demands, we sometimes find a gulf between us and our children, often arising from some foundational communication default. Amy Morin, a respected author and psychotherapist guides us through a route that can help us navigate childcare better.

Stop asking 'How was school today?' To raise successful, mentally strong kids, ask these 7 questions instead

“My child won't tell me anything about their day!” It's a common concern I hear from parents in my psychotherapy office. They're hoping to gain a glimpse into their child's world. But asking “How was school today?” usually leads to a one-word answer.

As a therapist and the author of *13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do*, I encourage parents to ask questions that are thoughtful and spark meaningful conversations. When kids reflect on their experiences, they practice skills like emotional awareness, problem-solving, and empathy, and develop a growth mindset.

Here are seven questions that lead to productive conversations while also helping kids grow mentally stronger:

1. 'What was the best part of your day?'

This question encourages kids to scan their brains for positives. For children who dislike school or tend to focus on what went wrong, answering this question helps them build optimism and gratitude which are both protective factors for mental health.

Frame the question with your own experience, saying, “The best part of my day was going for a walk during my lunch break. What about you?” Your child might share a highlight, like, “I played kickball at recess.”

2. 'What's a mistake you learned from today?'

This one normalizes errors and celebrates healthy risk-taking. Talking openly about mistakes reduces shame and helps kids see them as opportunities for growth.

Ask with a tone of curiosity, not judgment: “Did anything happen today that you'd do differently next time?” This might prompt them to say, “I forgot my library book so I'm going to pack it tonight so I don't forget.”

3. 'Who were you proud of today?'

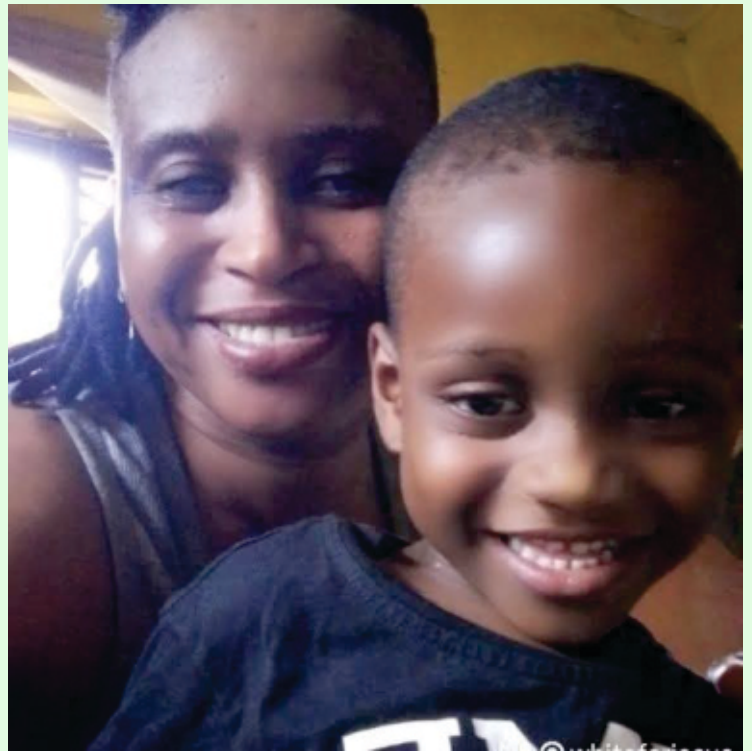
It works because it turns their attention to others and cultivates empathy. You will also gain insight into your child's relationships and what they value.

Make the question more specific by asking, for example, “Did you see anyone try really hard at something today?” Your child may talk about a friend who was brave or might give themselves a pat on the back and say, “My friend forgot her snack so I shared mine.”

4. 'What's one thing that would have made today better?'

This question helps kids identify feelings like frustration and disappointment without dwelling on those experiences. It naturally opens the door to problem-solving and planning.

You can ask in a fun way, such as, “If you had a magic wand to change one thing about today, what would it be?” This can lead to creative ideas, like, “I wish there was more



The bond between a mother and the child should be unbroken

time for my art project so maybe I'll bring it home to finish it.”

5. 'Who did you help today?'

You can empower kids to engage in prosocial behavior with questions like this. When you ask regularly, kids begin to look for opportunities to be helpful and acts of kindness become second nature.

Ask about small acts of contribution: “How were you a helper today?” They might remember something simple, like, “I helped the teacher pass out papers.”

6. 'What was the most interesting thing you learned today?'

It emphasizes curiosity over academic performance. Showing interest in the learning process itself fuels lifelong learning.

Encourage kids to talk about what they learned aside from just their subjects. They may share a fun fact, like, “I learned that my teacher knows how to play the violin.” Show interest and ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going.

7. 'What's something new you'd like to try?'

This nudges kids to look outside their comfort zone and encourages them to be courageous. They don't have to be good at something in order to try something new — it's a learning experience.

If your child hesitates to try new things, encourage an experiment by asking, “Is there a club or activity you're curious about just trying once?” They may be more likely to explore if they know they don't have to stick with it forever.

- By **Amy Morin** is a psychotherapist, clinical social worker and instructor at Northeastern University. She is the author of several books including *13 Things Strong Kids Do: Think Big, Feel Good, Act Brave* and *13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do*. Her TEDx talk “The Secret of Becoming Mentally Strong” is one of the most viewed talks of all time. Follow her on Instagram and Facebook.

“You have to create your visibility, create for your self and by yourself, that space that gets the world, your community, office, family, notice that you are there.”

- Mitchell Obama.



Rotary Club brings the world together. That meeting point of cultures of people was occasion for the marking of the birthday of HRM Queen (Dr.) Josephine Diете-Spiff earlier this year in the



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