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THIS DAY

Style

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2022



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AUSTEN-PETERS**
CULTURE CUSTODIAN

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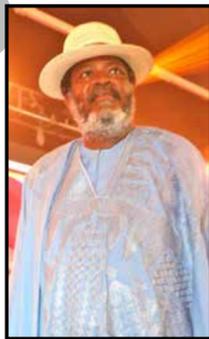
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COVER NOTE



Making a career as a filmmaker requires painstaking determination, resilience, and vision. Lawyer turned director, and producer Bolanle Austen-Peters has travelled the tough road to making a successful career in both film and theatre production. This week, **Funke Babs-Kufeji** speaks to her on her journey into film and theatre, taking a leap of faith from a thriving career in law to follow her passion and dreams.



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Society

GCU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION HONOURS OBAIGBENA AND ONYEMA
 Recently, the alumni association of Government College of Ughelli, Class of Friends (GCU-CoF), took time to honour some of their members, with the Chairman of Air Peace, Barrister Allen Onyema, conferred with the prestigious Man of the Year Award 2022 and the Chairman of Thisday Newspaper/Arise News Media Group, Prince Nduka Obaigbena, honoured with the 2022 Mariner of the Century award.

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Style

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EDITOR'S LETTER



EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Moving Forward

2022 is one of those years that so much is happening so fast, you barely have time to catch your breath. As the year winds down, it's natural to begin evaluating and reassessing goals set at the beginning. Was it a year of high achievement or one of just barely getting by? Not to put anyone under pressure but I believe that waiting till January only means you don't start the year prepared.

First off however, let's talk about the kind of year we have had. I must say it's been quite eventful, in many ways a roller coaster of economic upheaval, political activity and some news cycles that has got everyone in their feelings. A few of my friends I have spoken with have mixed feelings, and even though many of them achieved a lot, some other occurrences have left them somewhat dissatisfied with the state of things.

Some wanted to do better in business, others wanted to lose weight; a few people wanted to be in a new relationship or out of an old job they hate. Let's not even go into the many issues concerning our dear country that dampened the year even more. Someone even said to me that the events of this year have helped clarify what matters most to them and that I believe, is a major win, and perhaps the mindset we need to have going into the new year.

Anxiety about the coming year is natural, so is being dissatisfied about not achieving ones goals in the outgoing year. But here's the good news: anytime is a great time to kick-start change and begin again. Ignore the popular notion that the time to set goals, and resolutions is only at the beginning of a new year. Ignore the temptation to set yourself up for failure, by striking out ambitiously into several new habits all at once and boldly claiming that you will accomplish everything in the next 365 days. As we get ready to close one chapter and begin the next, keep in mind that our perspectives and the meanings we derive from our past can shape our future. Be mindful of the fact that we can always start a new chapter and set new goals. Believe that the next will be your best year, and then make it so.

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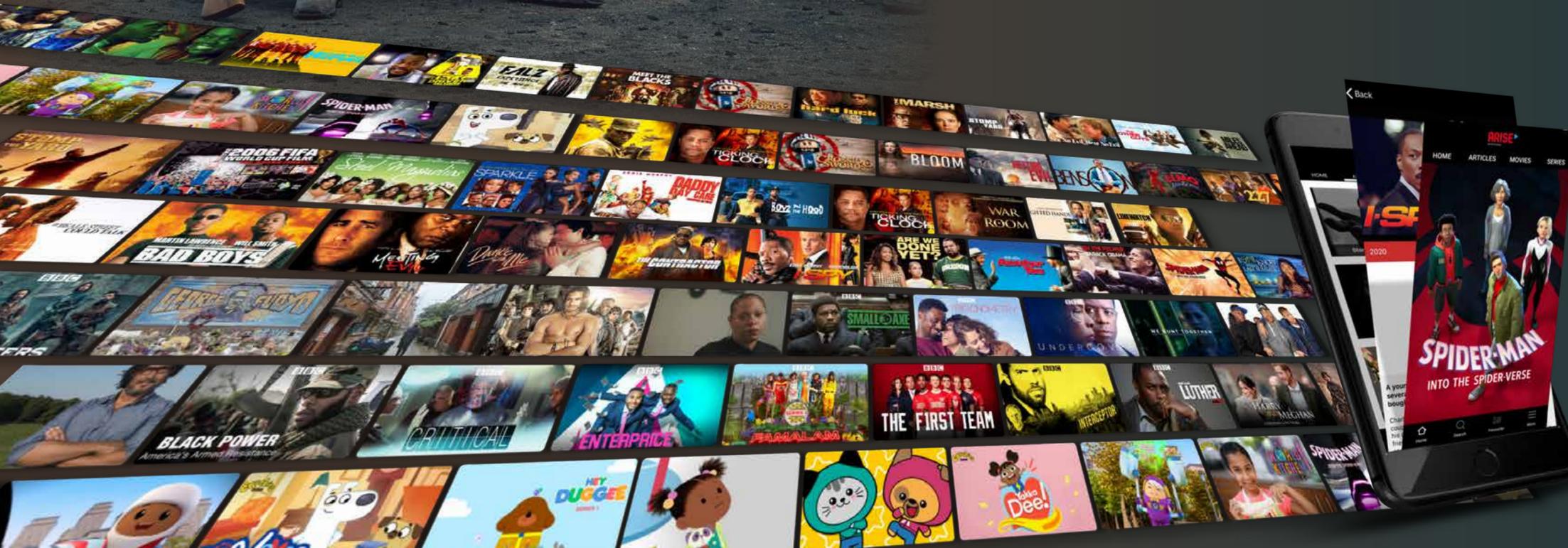
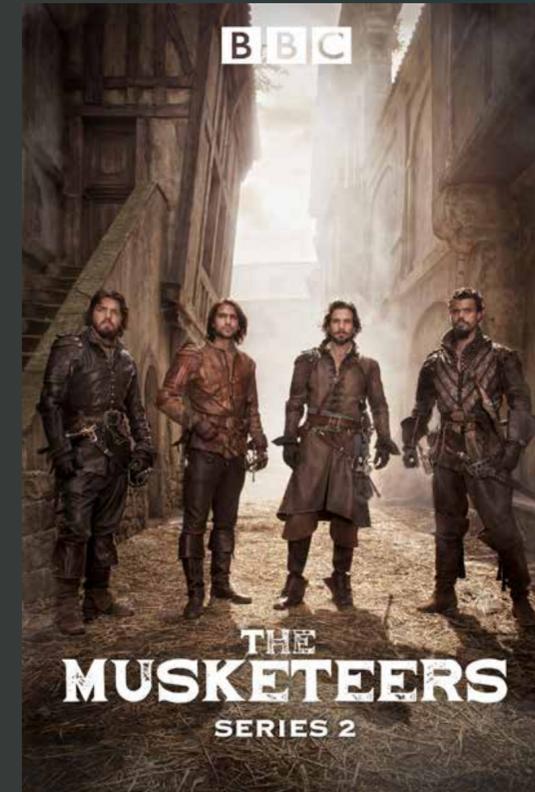
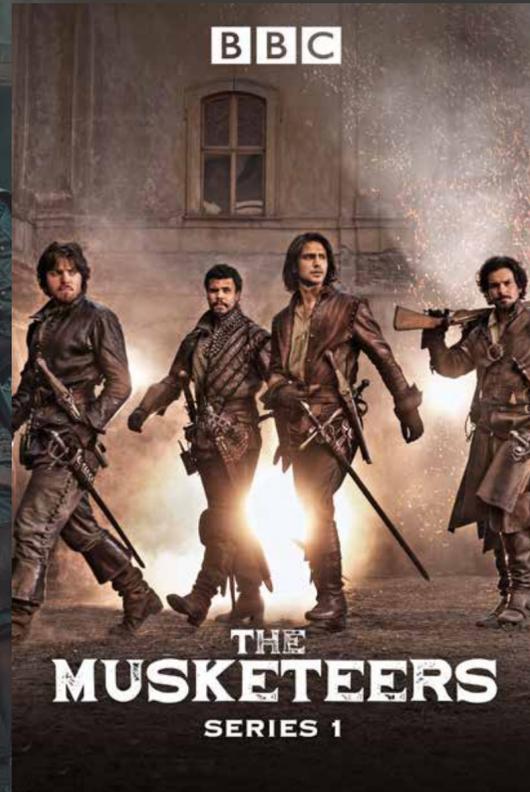
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FUP applies to some of these plans

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WILLIAM LAWSON'S NAIJA HIGHLANDAH GRAND FINALE

AKINWALE AWATT EMERGES FIRST NAIJA HIGHLANDAH, WINS N2M AND ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO SCOTLAND

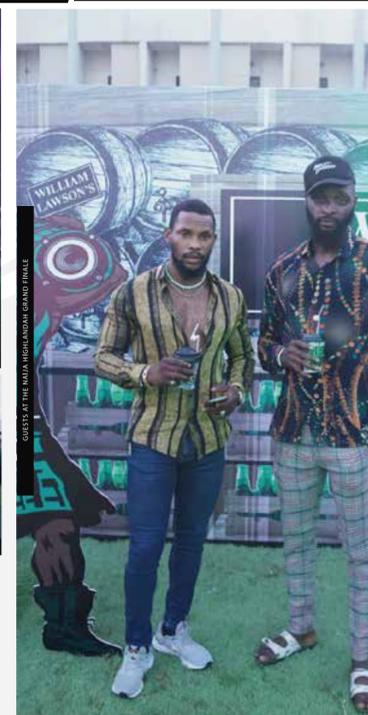


William Lawson's blended Scotch Whisky recently concluded its Naija Highlandah campaign at the Grand Finale event that held at The Stables, Union Bank Sports Ground, Bode Thomas, Surulere, Lagos.

The quest by the blended but daring Scotch whisky brand William Lawson's for the boldest, most unconventional, and good-humored Nigerian who embodies the iconic Highlander characters of the brand's 'personality began on October 6, and culminated on November 12, when Akinwale Awatt conquered every obstacle, outwitted other finalists with his grits, and ultimately earned his kilt, and the bragging rights as the first-ever Naija Highlandah champion, earning for himself, the two million-Naira grand prize, and a trip to Scotland.

Fifteen contestants, consisting of 13 males and two females emerged as finalists from the more than 5,000 participants of legal drinking age that registered for the contest during the 4-week activations at various bars and supermarkets across Lagos State. These brave finalists turned up at The Stable, Surulere for their final opportunity and showed hearts with displays fitting for true-born highlanders as they battled through challenges to be named the ultimate Naija Highlandah.

William Lawson's treated guests at the Grand Finale to a memorable experience with thrilling music performances and dance choreography, lots of exciting games and challenges as Akinwale Awatt outwitted the field with an unmatched display of Highlander grit and wit to win the title of the first-ever Naija Highlandah, the trophy, and the star prizes at stake.



WILLIAM LAWSON'S
NO RULES. GREAT SCOTCH.

MOËT & CHANDON CHAMPAGNE DAY

By Funke Babs-Kufeji

The Global Champagne Day is celebrated every year on the fourth Friday in October; this year it was held on the 28th of October, raising a glass of champagne in celebration of a custom enjoyed for centuries. The global champagne day offers a unique opportunity to honour the celebratory drink and toast to the very Maison that has forged that association: – Moët & Chandon, the Maison chosen in 1748 to supply the French royal court in Versailles. Moët & Chandon, having garnered the love of the world, seamlessly united multiple countries throughout Africa on the day to share in the joy of champagne. Right across the region, Moët & Chandon showcased their reputation for glamour and savoir-fête with eight exclusive gatherings bringing together Friends of the House, celebrities, and dignitaries. In honour of the global champagne day. The event, which in Nigeria was held at the roof top of The Belmonte, a 20-story luxury building on the prestigious Bourdillon Road in the heart of Ikoyi, is one of those who attended won't forget very soon. Invited guests on arrival were welcomed with champagne cocktails and glasses of champagne for picture-taking inside a carefully curated interactive glitter pod before they were moved to a lavishly set table where a scrumptious three course meal was served by the upscale Kaly Restaurant and paired with some of the prestigious champagnes the Moët & Chandon collection holds. As guests got on with their meals, they were schooled on the history of the house Moët & Chandon and all the champagne they produce. Simi Dre and Jimmy played the perfect hosts of the evening on behalf of Moët & Chandon team, engaging guests



SIMI DREY & TIMINI EGBUSON



DANIEL ETIM-EFFIONG & ANITA ADETOYE



SASKAY



SISIANO PAOLO, ALEX OKE, DIANE RUSSET AND EFE IRELE



SUJIBOMI OGUNDELE, TAREK BAKER AND LOU BAKER



IFEOMA CHIZEA



AKIN FAMINU



SAMUEL AND BISOLA OTIGBA



OLUWOLE AWOLEKE AND STEPHANIE COKER



JIMMIE AKINSOLA AND MIMI ONALAJA

GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UGHELLI, ALUMNI ASSOCIATION HONOURS PRINCE NDUKA OBAIGBENA AND BARRISTER ALLEN ONYEMA

Recently, the alumni association of Government College of Ughelli, Class of Friends (GCU-CofF), took time to honour some of their members, with the Chairman of Air Peace, Barrister Allen Onyema, conferred with the prestigious Man of the Year Award 2022 and the Chairman of Thisday Newspaper/Arise News Media Group, Prince Nduka Obaigbena, honoured with the 2022 Mariner of the Century award. The award ceremony, which was held at the Federal Palace Hotel, VI, had in attendance several alumni who have made a mark in various facets of life.

Speaking at the event, The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, GCU Class of Friends, Mr Cyril Ogude, said both Onyema and Obaigbena had established themselves as high achievers, and by honouring them, the GCU is acknowledging them as entrepreneurial role models.



NDUKA OBAIGBENA

ALLEN ONYEMA

SPENCER & GRACE ONOSODE



DIDI NDIOMU & CHIEDU EBIE



WALE EDUN

RUKEYWE UGWUMBA



ENIOL BELLO

KAYODE KOMOLAFE

CHARLES NDIOMU

CYRIL OGUDE

ABEL DAFIAGHOR

HOPE MADUKA

DAVIES OKRABSOSO



DOUGLAS OMOTOR



OBONGANWAN BARBARA JAMES



FRANCIS PEST



JUDE SUALAZE-ONOH & ADERONKE ONOH



MUDI



MARK MORDI



EMEKA OSSAI

HNC CLASS AWARDEE

LDA RENAISSANCE SS23

Nigeria's Leading Fashion Designer Lanre Da Silva Ajayi recently unveiled her Renaissance, SS23 women's collection at a well-attended private fashion show. The event which took place in Ikoyi Lagos had the best of Lagos high society and fashion industry leaders. The Renaissance is a 50 piece collection boasting the best of fabrics, textures and stand out designs. This would be the first time the A-list designer would host a private show, as she has always previously released her collections during fashion week.



LANRE DA SILVA AJAYI



LEO DA SILVA



FEMI DA SILVA



JOKE SILVA



MRS DA SILVA AND YEMISI WADA



TITI OGUNBAJO, YINKA TAIGA, ENO UDOH, YEMISI WADA, GUEST, DUNNI IGBINEDION



MORAYO



TOJU FOYEH AND YEMISI WADA



JIMI MOHAMMED AND OPE MAKINWA



MAI ATAFO



MIMI ONALAJA



AKUNNA NWALA- AKANO AND EZINNE CHINKATA



UCHE NWANDISON



LISA FOLAWIYO COLL 1 2023

Mixing prints and pattern has to be one of the most fun, stand out trend to try right now, and also, the most difficult. But trust Lisa Folawiyo to 100% pull it off in her latest SS 23 collection. Showing it off at a private well attended fashion show in Lagos, the collection which featured the best of bright coloured fabrics, sequins, feathers and more is definitely one of her best yet .



BOLAJO FAWEHINMI



POWEDE AWUJO



DERIN ODUGESANTHOMAS



DENOLA ADEPETUN



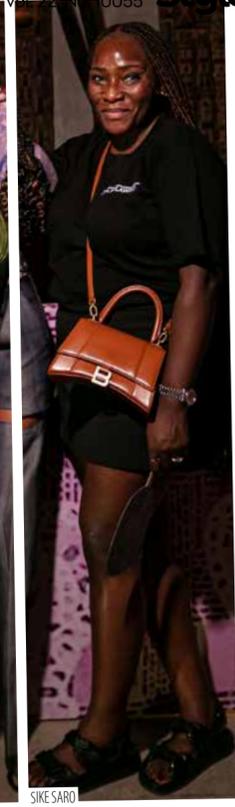
ENIAFE MOMODU



LISA FOLAWIYO



KAREN KOSHONI



SIKE SARO



RUTH OSIME, DEOLA BALI, DOLORES ODOGWU AND GUEST



AKUNNA NWALA



CHEF FREGZ



DOLAPO AND ADEGBITE SUIJUWADE



EZINNE CHINKATA



ONAH NWACHUKWU



RUTH ISABELLA

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Hosted by Emerging Businesses and The W Initiative



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BOLANLE AUSTEN-PETERS

CULTURE CUSTODIAN

Making a career as a filmmaker requires painstaking determination, resilience, and vision. Lawyer turned director, and producer Bolanle Austen-Peters has travelled the tough road to making a successful career in both film and theatre production. She is very quick to tell how her passion for Nigerian art and culture led her into this uncharted territory. Today, Bolanle is the owner of one of Nigeria's biggest production companies, Bolanle Austen-Peter Production (BAP), a company passionate about telling unique indigenous stories through theatre and film. She also runs one of Nigeria's most standard theatres for arts and is a fellow of the Legatum Center for Development and Entrepreneurship of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She recently established an academy aiming to train 65,000 young Nigerians in technical and business skills over five years. This week, **Funke Babs-Kufeji** speaks to her on her journey into film and theatre, taking a leap of faith from a thriving career in law to follow her passion and dreams.

Prior to becoming an award-winning producer and director, you had a thriving career as a lawyer who had worked for a reputable law firm and the United Nations. So why Nollywood? How did you get introduced to the industry?

I was introduced to Nollywood by Udoka Oyeka, a movie director who asked me to produce his short film in 2012. Later I fund-raised for the post-production of October 1 the movie. That was my introduction to Nollywood. I often am not in your face, so my entry into Nollywood was measured and gradual.

Tell us about your journey thus far. You have said Terra Culture was birthed out of your love for arts and culture. What was it like for you at the time you started?

I started Terra Culture as a response to Nigeria's lack of cultural and artistic spaces. It was not easy at the beginning with the lack of funding for the arts and the need for more skilled staff in the culture space. Over the years, it has morphed into an auction house, a movie and theatre house and a restaurant. Things have changed and are much better now.

So what were your major challenges starting Terra Culture and your production company, BAP Productions? Any different from the regular?

Not exactly. The lack of proper infrastructure fundamentally hampers an entrepreneur's capability to build and innovate. Without basic provisions such as good roads and a stable power supply almost immediately renders, entrepreneurial efforts are futile. This, in addition to a lack of proper funding, means businesses have to operate sometimes for years before they can break even, let alone turn a profit. On an industry-specific level, an apt example is how we had to build our theatre to access a satisfactory space for putting on our stage plays. This speaks to the breed of entrepreneurs that thrive in Nigeria.

Now that you are fully in the industry, are there challenges peculiar to women in the film industry, especially in terms of directing and producing?

One of the things I'm proud of about this industry is that a lot of women are doing great things. Everyone knows we're just as creative, business savvy and knowledgeable as anybody else. We've all overcome the challenges of executing a vision in a male society and succeeded. Yes, there are challenges, but they're similar to the problems women in other industries face. Regardless of our work, we all are going up against a society that underestimates our contributions and value, but we are persevering regardless.

As a Producer, how involved do you get in the writing of a project?

I'm involved at every stage. I give notes on drafts, and even during the filming, I'm still tweaking and changing things as I see fit. I even develop film ideas and hire a writer to write the script. I am a storyteller at heart, so being involved in every part of the process is very important to me.

Your first theatre production was "Saro", a huge success. It even went on tour in London and had good ratings. What inspired this production, and what other role, besides from producer and director, did you play in bringing this show to fruition?

Here is a funny story about Saro. Early in the process of cutting my teeth on some creative work, I came up with the brilliant idea to bring musicals to Nigeria. Partly wanting everything to turn out perfect and partly not fully believing in myself as a first-timer, I outsourced the direction of the musical, putting my vision in the hands of others. Needless to say, the execution wasn't as I had visualised it. Naysayers and critics expected me to quit and go home licking my wounds. Most people would. But at that moment, amid dismay and dejection, I found the drive, strength, and resilience. I dug my heels in and fixed the production; by taking charge, I became the director and redirected every scene step by step until I saw my vision come back to life. I became the costume designer, set designer, music coordinator, et cetera. Needless to say, there was a backlash. Firstly being a woman in a male-dominated industry. Secondly, I was perceived as an outsider as a lawyer. Eventually, the musical became a huge success and the springboard for future successful productions.

So far, which will you say is your favourite theatre show you have produced and directed and why?

Based on the story told above, Saro the musical has to be my favourite, as, through the experience of creating it, I learned to take full ownership of my vision. I also learned you could not out-source your creative dream to anyone. Above all, I learned never to quit. Artistically, Death and the King's Horseman is my favourite. Aesthetically, Fela and the Kalakuta Queens and Moremi the Musical were my most creative work. Strangely, I love my movies equally because they are so different.

You were into theatre production for the longest time before you shifted two years ago to include film production; why and what made you make this move?

Theatre, and movies, my real passion is telling uniquely indigenous stories. This means that with all products we put out and in all services we provide, we have to ensure that we tell uniquely Nigerian stories and promote homemade products. Our restaurant is known for the best Nigerian cuisine served in a space with a beautiful and nostalgic cultural ambience. Our film and stage play productions focus squarely on telling uniquely Nigerian stories taking our culture to the global stage. Our bookstore and gallery are labyrinths of Nigerian cultural beauty and give an intimate look into society's psyche.

Also, looking at the landscape of filmmaking in Nigeria, there had been a lack of strong female representation. I felt it necessary for the African girl child to have strong female role models in film and art.

So what's it been like so far? And Netflix? How did that happen?

My first film was 93 days which I produced. My directorial debut was The Bling Lagosians. Collision course was a great film to work on too. As for Netflix, when you make very good films in terms of both the story and production quality that audiences find appealing, distributors will always come looking for you.



Photography: Tobi Olayisade for Rainbow Studio
Shoot location: Terra Culture



I started Terra Culture as a response to Nigeria's lack of cultural and artistic spaces. It was not easy at the beginning with the lack of funding for the arts and the need for more skilled staff in the culture space.



Collision Course was the gateway into your first Netflix original, "Man of God" what was your experience working with Netflix?

Man of God was released before Collision Course. I think this is a mark of the kind of films they are. Collision Course was shot and ready before Man of God but dropped afterwards. Some consider Collision Course controversial as it touches on topical issues plaguing the country. It had to be handled and released with care, which it was. A great mark of a good working relationship is the ability to be of one mind on handling sensitive matters for the benefit of all parties involved.

Having had the feel of both theatre and film, which do you prefer and why?

I love them both equally and differently. Theatre is undisputed in its professionalism and its intensity. It is incredibly demanding. There are no do-overs in theatre; the simplest mistake can be extremely costly. Cast and crew must be adaptive and dynamic. The audience gets a tailor-made experience and is left blown away by experiencing everything live. The film is currently one of the most powerful storytelling mediums. Movies travel all around the globe and are accessed by millions of people in the blink of an eye. Movies rewrite history, tell people's stories and immortalise their culture forever. According to Netflix, to demonstrate the reach of movies, Man of God did over 6 million views globally within three weeks of release. You can imagine how many people have watched it by now.

What projects do you see yourself involved with in the future, or are you working on anything right now?

I'm committed to telling Nigerian stories on a grand scale. I want to do critically acclaimed projects with commercial success as well—stories with strong messages that have a global impact. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, which I have just finished, is on that scale. It is big, bold and wholly Nigerian.

Apart from your production company, you also have an academy called Terra Academy for the Arts(TAFTA). What is the academy

about, and who are your prospective students?

I started this initiative to concretise my skills transfer in the arts industry. TAFTA aims to educate young Nigerians in the relevant skills that can make them successful in the creative industry. Prospective students are all young Nigerians, particularly the underprivileged between 18-35.

When was the academy established, and what has been your most outstanding achievement since its inception?

The academy was established in 2021. Our partnership with the Mastercard Foundation has been a big thing for us, and we're happy to be working with them on this initiative. So far, over 4,000 students have registered for the first cohort. We aim to train 65,000 young Nigerians over five years. Already we have partnered with many local and international schools to develop our technical and business skills curriculum.

What qualification does one need to be a part of this academy?

You need a minimum of a GSCE, and you should be at least 16.

You were recently selected for the prestigious fellowship programme of the Legatum Centre for Development and Entrepreneurship of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This hybrid training will take you and other fellows across select African cities for study tours and coursework in Boston. Tell me, how were you shortlisted, and how do you intend to translate this win to catapult to the next level on your entrepreneurship journey?

This is a huge honour for me. Becoming a fellow of MIT is fantastic because, as an artist, it demonstrates that you can still have academic recognition. It allows me to reflect on my work over the past 19 years and share experiences with other successful entrepreneurs. It encourages other creatives who want to follow my path. To be accepted into the Fellowship, you are nominated by other fellows based on recognition of your work.

Any last word for anyone, especially women who want to pursue a career in film or theatre production and directing?

Go for it. Have a clear voice and a vision, and tell your story boldly. Know your craft. Study and do it. Nothing will prepare you like experience, so start where you can and keep building. Run your race. Invest in time. Rome was not built in a day.



I'm committed to telling Nigerian stories on a grand scale. I want to do critically acclaimed projects with commercial success as well as stories with strong messages that have a global impact.

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Ten Things This Week

NEWS

DANIEL ETIM EFFIONG WINS BEST ACTOR AT THE AFRIFF GLOBE AWARDS.

Daniel Etim Effiong was awarded the Globe Award for Best Actor in Jude Idada's film "Kofa", received at the Africa International Film Festival (AFRIFF) 2022. The psychological thriller Kofa tells the story of eight people who wake up in their underwear and find themselves locked in a room. Each one struggled to remember who they were, where they were, and why they were there as they were picked out, one after the other, by an armed man. Their names are all they remember.

Featuring a star-studded cast, the film was written, directed, and produced by Jude Idada with a team of producers including Chibuzo "Chibie" Louis-Okoye, Femi D Ogunsanwo, and Steve Sodiya.

From the six nominations received, 'Kofa' also won the award for Best Screenplay for Jude Idada. There were also nominations for Best Actress Zainab Balogun, Best Director Jude Idada, and Audience Choice.



AIR PEACE SUSPENDS DUBAI FLIGHT.

Air Peace has announced the suspension of its flight service to Dubai following the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) decision to stop issuing visas to Nigerians.

In a statement signed by Air Peace management, the airline said, "We hereby inform the public, especially our Dubai passengers, that effective from Tuesday, November 22, 2022, we shall be suspending our Dubai operations till further notice. This is consequent upon the persisting non-issuance of visas to Nigerian travellers by the government of the United Arab Emirates and the accompanying inconveniences.

BURNA BOY WINS BEST AFRICAN ACT AT EMA 2022.

Nigerian singer Damini Ogulu, known as Burna Boy, has won the 'Best Africa Act' award at the 2022 MTV European Music Awards.

The award show saw Burna Boy nominated alongside Ayra Starr, Musa Keys, Tems, Zuchu and Black Sheriff. Though announced winner, the 31-year-old wasn't physically present to receive his award.



OLAMIDE OLOWE IS YOUNGEST BLACK WOMAN EVER TO RAISE \$10 MILLION IN FUNDING



Topicals skincare has announced a \$10 million financing round led by CAVU Consumer Partners. The 26-year-old founder and CEO, Olamide Olowe, is the youngest Black woman ever to raise more than \$2 million in venture funding. Already she was included in the Forbes 30 Under 30 list for 2022 for her previous fundraising of \$2.6 million. The fastest-growing skincare brand at Sephora, Topicals appeals to Gen-Z consumers through its TikTok and Instagram marketing, eye-catching packaging, and mental health advocacy. Founded in 2020, Topicals saw revenues increase three-fold in 2021. In 2022, the company sold one product every minute.



BALENCIAGA EXITS TWITTER

Balenciaga has deactivated its Twitter account, losing one million followers should it be permanently deleted. The Paris-based luxury house did not explain its exit from the social media channel, but the platform's woes under new owner Elon Musk are thought to be the reason. Mr Musk's vision for Twitter, which includes a strategy to foster free speech in all its forms and having to purchase verification, has irked many of the platform's users. Recently, large numbers of users have left the platform, including celebrity and model Gigi Hadid, and some companies, like General Motors, suspended advertising.

ESTEE LAUDER TO BUY TOM FORD IN A \$2.8 BILLION DEAL

Luxury cosmetics firm Estee Lauder will be buying designer fashion house Tom Ford in a deal worth \$2.8bn (£2.4bn). The deal would be Estee Lauder's biggest acquisition to date. The US beauty firm already licenses Tom Ford fragrances and cosmetics and beat off competition from Gucci owner Kering SA to clinch the deal.

Tom Ford will remain in his current position as creative director until 2023, at least, the companies announced.



WIZKID RELEASES NEW ALBUM

Wizkid has released his fifth Album, "More Love, Less Ego". The 13-track album includes features by Ayra Starr, Skillibeng, Sheen sea, Naira Marley, Skepta, and Don Toliver.

Speaking on the Album, 32-year-old Wizkid said, "I feel we need more love in our communities. We need to just be good to one another and appreciate life more. So, this album title and even the music is just my own way of making people feel good."



BURNA BOY AND TEMS GET 65TH GRAMMY AWARDS NOMINATION



Nigerian pop stars Tems and Burna Boy have been nominated for the 65th annual Grammy Awards. Tems was nominated alongside Future and Drake in the Best Melodic Rap Performance category for the song, 'Wait for U'. The song was also nominated in the Best Rap Song category.

Tems, whose full name is Temilade Openiyi, also received a nomination for being part of Beyoncé's 'Renaissance' Album. The Album was nominated in the Album of the Year category.

As for Burna Boy, he received a nomination for the song 'Last Last' in the Best Global Music Performance category. The self-proclaimed 'African Giant' also received a nomination for his latest album 'Love, Damini' in the Best Global Music Album category.

KUDA EXPANDS TO THE UK

Kuda, the money app for Africans, is launching in the UK as part of a major global expansion drive, following a total investment of over US\$90 million. In a statement by the company, the launch will, among other things, enable hundreds of thousands of UK-based Nigerians to combat high remittance costs on large transfers, which currently average at eight per cent – significantly short of the UN Sustainable Development Goal target of three per cent. Kuda Technologies Limited was founded in 2019 by two Nigerians, Babs Ogundeyi and Musty Mustapha. Its Nigerian business rapidly expanded to become the country's number one money app, with nearly five million customers.



BEYONCÉ AND JAY-Z ARE THE MOST NOMINATED ARTISTS IN GRAMMYS HISTORY.

Pop icon Beyoncé has received the most 2023 Grammy nominations with nine in total, putting her in a tie with her husband, rapper Jay-Z, as the most nominated artist of all time. Beyoncé and Jay-Z both have 88 nominations in total for the peer-voted music awards. Jay-Z received five 2023 nominations for contributions to Renaissance and DJ Khaled's song, "God Did."



NEWS



Last night I heard the screaming, loud voices behind the wall, another sleepless night for me, it won't do no good to call the police..... and when they arrive, they say they can't interfere with domestic affairs.
- Tracy Chapman

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MURDER:

When will enough be enough?

By Yomi Owope

The stories are familiar: loud voices, quarrelling, then violence, tears, and blood. Growing up, most of us knew someone - a neighbour, family member, even coworker, who was a survivor, victim - or perpetrator of domestic violence. Many were directly exposed to it in their own homes and grew up used to it, becoming perpetrators or victims themselves. In the 1990s, it was normal to see a man slap his wife for her "sharp mouth" as a type of discipline, like she was one of his children. And no one interfered because, well, it's a domestic affair. The children are powerless under daddy's ruthless rod of correction and will grow up scarred by the experience. Today, one often hears how a boyfriend wants to teach his girl a lesson for being rude or taxi drivers threatening violence to single women because "I get your type for house."

Gender-based violence is not an easy thing to deal with under any circumstance. And even though men have seen their share of violence against their persons by their significant other, there is no doubt that more than 95% of reported cases clearly show that women are usually the victims. It's not only a Nigerian problem; in countries like South Africa and India, rape and other forms of violence against women are prevalent, with nearly 30 per cent of men admitting to being perpetrators of the crime and only a tiny fraction made to face the consequences.

Back home, the entire country was spurred to action when the 36 governors of the federation jointly declared a state of emergency against gender-based violence at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2020. It was in response to recorded incidences of several girls and young women being raped, assaulted and murdered under diverse circumstances - at home, school, work and in church! Celebrities - often silent victims themselves - lent their voices to the growing movement, as did wives of governors and clergy, who organized protests online and on the streets. It helped redirect national consciousness towards violence against women; activism was driven with the help of media reports and community participation. It was unprecedented, and for the first time, we all felt that things could change, that survivors would be free to tell their stories and

that offenders would be made to face the consequences.

Just over two years later, we are still collectively distressed by news of yet another act of willful brutality against another woman - almost on a weekly basis. And these are only the ones we know about or are documented on the internet. Earlier this month, a young lady in Kogi State filmed her father beating her mother repeatedly and posted it on Twitter, seeking help. In her words, "I have to speak up before my mum ends like Osinachi." In another incident a few days later, the Lagos State Police Command confirmed the arrest of Ikechukwu Ogbonna, known as IVD, over the death of his wife, Abimbola. Again, on October 15, Ondo State police arrested 42-year-old Kelechukwu Onuka for the murder of his wife over a N10 million naira dispute. In Jos, Plateau State, one Matthew Samuel stabbed his wife after an argument, and she died in the hospital. It's a long trajectory of violence upon violence meted against women across the country with very little data on the actual state of things - until somebody dies.

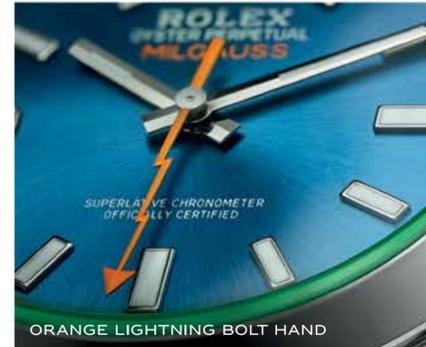
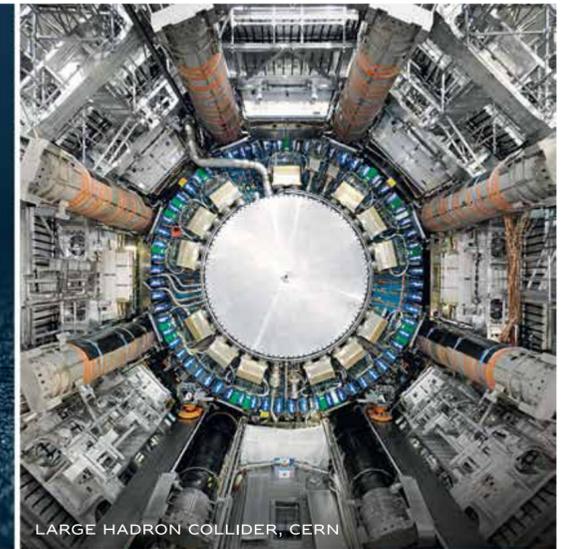
The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency said in June this year that 2,334 cases of domestic violence and four deaths were recorded in the state in just six months. This is in a State with strong violence against persons laws, with a fair record of arrests and prosecution. Imagine the number of unspoken cases around the country! While it is a form of support to declare #justiceforosinachi, our outrage should go beyond social media and translate to concrete action. In cases which end up in the death of the woman, it is usually common knowledge with family members, neighbours and coworkers that that she was being abused. Perhaps it is time for early intervention mechanisms to protect victims and save lives because often, when cases arrive on Twitter, it is either too late, or irreparable damage may have been done in the form of mental trauma and emotional distress.

During the pandemic, the UN referred to domestic violence, specifically intimate partner violence, as a shadow pandemic. Today, the approach to dealing with the issue of violent behaviour in the home should no longer be

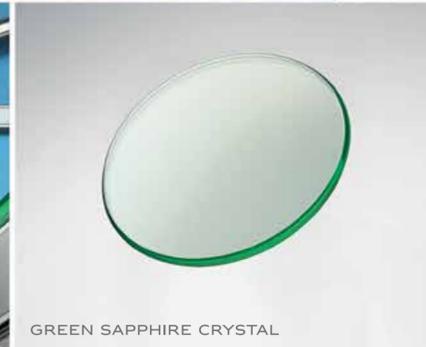
discussed in hushed tones. Activists already working in this area should receive greater assistance to confront the social menace through funding and establishing a stronger presence in local communities. Survivors and people living through the nightmare of domestic violence and abuse should not find it so difficult to seek help. A situation where a battered woman arrives at a temporary shelter, and cannot access services that will help her stand on her own two feet and must return to her abuser because she has nowhere else to go, is quite horrifying. It makes rubbish the very idea of the intervention in the first place.

We need an end-to-end solution for survivors and victims. It should be a comprehensive program that addresses their physical and mental health and provides an economic safety net for as long as they require it. This is not too much to ask if we will record declines in the number of domestic violence incidences in our country. Victim blaming should cease, including in cases where the woman is reluctant to leave her abuser. Instead, more investment should go into counselling and other professional services, including gathering data and sharing same with collaborating agencies. We should learn what countries like Canada and the Scandinavians - with their low prevalence of domestic violence - are doing right, then try and adapt the same at home.

Specifically, it has been discovered that countries with higher gender equality quotients fare better and have low rates of domestic violence. This means that the more women feel empowered, the better they will do all round, and men are less likely to abuse them. This is what it comes down to then: education and economic empowerment of women; it comes down to enforcing existing laws against gender-based violence and expanding intervention programs that protect women long term. It also means getting full institutional backing and the support of men who control those institutions. Religious bodies, the corporate sector, and government should have specific gender violence policies as part of their set-up, not as incidentals, not as an afterthought. It's what is happening to people we know and see every day. Let us treat it that way, with the urgency it deserves.



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ROLEX

Nkem Onwudiwe is a Public Relations and Marketing Consultant and the founder of Her Network, a global inspirational and lifestyle platform that connects, inspires, and amplifies women's voices and stories. Her focus is on impacting lives and communities through Her Network's various impact events, experiences and digital content, including an annual Her Network Woman of the Year awards ceremony that honours outstanding Women of Impact across diverse sectors in Nigeria.

NKEM ONWUDIWE



What inspired Her Network?

Her Network was inspired by my desire to see more women coming together to support one another (Bridging the gap between women). At the time, "You can't sit with us" was the order of the day. You see, at the time, I attended so many conferences and events, and one thing that was consistent across board was that the people who attracted my attention to participate in the event seemed so far away and unreachable. As I attended more and more of such gatherings, my desire to change the narrative grew stronger, and one day, I decided to start building a platform that wasn't restrictive, classist or conditional. One that genuinely positively impacts lives with words and deeds, and here we are today.

So, what's your ultimate goal?

To positively impact and transform lives through every impact experience and digital content Her Network produces.

I imagine it wasn't easy to build an online-based community of women. How did you go about it? What were your biggest issues and challenges?

Her Network isn't just an online-based community. We have in-person meet-ups, and other impact experiences run throughout the year. From our mixers to chats and cocktails to other curated events for female-focused organisations. Technology has also helped us reach more women beyond the immigration borders, but we are beyond an online community. It hasn't been easy, and our biggest challenge has to be financial support! We have so many people interested in how we do what we are doing through Her Network, but consistent support in financial form is the greatest challenge encountered.

How has your experience with Her Network impacted you as a person?

Every day, Her Network makes me a better person for sure! Her Network has stretched me to push myself further than I could have imagined over the years. By running the platform, I have had the honour to meet and sit in rooms with amazing women, listening to their stories and learning from incredible lead-

ers, and I can't thank Her Network enough for some of the connections I've made through the platform.

Tell me about Her Summit; will this be an annual event?

That's the plan! Lol. Her Summit will year on year bring together young women to connect with and learn from young female leaders, entrepreneurs and true catalysts for change in their various sectors, from entrepreneurship to tech and more. When they say that young people will be the leaders of tomorrow, they are not kidding! The world is filled with so much superficiality these days, and we are raising Queens in a world where you have no control over what values society will try to instil in her, no matter how strong her fundamental upbringing is. So, amid the chaos, we created the Summit as a safe space for women to share, learn how to meet the speakers, Network with them, connect with them, and, most importantly, leave the Summit feeling elevated, impacted, and rejuvenated. Her Summit isn't a conventional summit, and we didn't start it to tick boxes; we want to see lives transformed, not through the laying of hands or the distribution of money or other material items (though giveaways do occur... lol) but through the planting of powerful seeds that propel young women in the right direction as professionals, entrepreneurs, aspiring change makers, and trailblazers. We hope to receive funding from organisations that share our vision and believe in the power of elevating women across industries.

You are very passionate about building a community of strong Women. Asides from the obvious, any particular reason?

I wouldn't say that building a community of strong Women is my passion because there's only so much one can do on the outside to build a strong woman from within. On the other hand, my passion is connecting, inspiring, and encouraging women from various industries, which Her Network has enabled me to do. We are all stars, and as women, we are all valuable; our stories can inspire the next woman to live her truth and stand in her greatness, but how will these stories inspire if they are not told or shared? Creating safe spaces

for women to connect through Her Network's various impact experiences, providing a platform that allows women of influence to be heard and seen, and consistently celebrating and positively projecting the works and achievements of women on a global scale is where I would say my passion lies.

There is a lot of female empowerment initiative going on currently; what are you doing to ensure women in your community get involved or take advantage of these opportunities?

Every initiative for women's empowerment has its vision, goals, and objectives. Her Network was officially founded in 2016 (though the concept was conceived in 2015). Our vision has remained consistent, even as our approach has evolved in response to times, seasons, diversification, and expansion. We ensure that women within our purview take advantage of the opportunities provided by initiatives designed to propel women. We encourage them to "Carpe Diem" and "Level up" by supporting them in areas where they need it, particularly in finding the courage to take that bold step and seize that opportunity if they believe it aligns with what they envision for themselves.

I have found that in some cases, all some people needed to be propelled to the next level was to be in the same room with someone they'd wished to connect with for a long time and to be given the opportunity to connect with such persons on a one-on-one level. One example is our Dinner with Her series, which brings together a group of women to dine and connect with a respected female leader.

Are there any policies you believe the government can implement to support female inclusion?

There are many, but I'll focus on implementing a gender balance policy, particularly in terms of increased female representation in parliament. The percentage of female representation in parliament is depressingly low, and this is not due to a lack of qualified women to fill these positions but rather to the sentiments surrounding the implementation of this policy. What are our male legislators and leaders afraid of? Our Network strongly advocates for SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality and the empowerment/elevation of all women and girls.

This policy must be implemented, not just enacted; they are not doing us any favours by ensuring a high percentage of female representation in decision-making positions; it is a fundamental human right! I was in Rwanda earlier this year as a speaker for the COWAP Summit. I left inspired by women's role in post-genocide peace-building and how they've grown to have the highest representation in parliament worldwide! Not to say that such policies should be implemented to check boxes, but I am convinced that there are competent women who can take up parliamentary positions and are unafraid to use their voices to drive long-term change.

Anything else you would like me to know?

I'm grateful for the opportunity to use your platform to amplify what we do at Her Network. I'd also like to mention that Her Network recently collaborated with Lagos Cocktail Week to host a MixHer Challenge at the annual festival. Her Network, with the support of Omalicha by Middlechase, provided resources to some female bartenders to support their ambition and passion for bartending.

A-Gen
Z
with
Cayo Lawal



theyolawal@gmail.com

Honestly, I don't get this "it's all about the journey"



"Which is more important," asked Big Panda, "the journey or the destination?"

"The company," said Tiny Dragon.

How can the place I'm trying to be, be less rewarding or exciting than the rough and long road it took to get there?

"Life is about the journey, not the destination." A quote used for self-help, as a 'get-yourself-back-up' if you don't accomplish a goal. It's on every "Quote To Live By" list ever made. As overused as it seems, many seekers of "meaning" have found that this lady called life is indeed about the journey.

You know, the idea of having a journey in life has been injected into my mind for as long as I can remember. Like every other kid, it fully manifested when I was old enough to have passions and paths I wanted to explore in this journey. Now having my own fair share of life experiences and being on the so-called "journey". There are two things I wholeheartedly believe;

1. We're sure all are on a journey. A voyage to find out what our reason for being here is. (Some people accomplish this along the way, and some others don't, but hey, "it's all about the journey," right?) For some people, it might be exhausting all of their talents and living out life through that. For others, it is to give themselves to the world and pour in so much good. It could also be gathering as much wealth as possible, ending generational poverty in your family. (This is the perfect segue to number two!)

2. Everyone's journey is different. This is also something I strongly believe. As much as we're in this together, we have individual roads paved out for us. Like a plane, not everyone flying with you is going to the same destination - even if you arrive together. While it may be your last destination, some people have connecting flights and still have some distance to go.

That being said, I need help understanding how it's all about the journey. All? The even crazier bit, the ultimate cosmic joke, is that we won't truly understand that until we've taken the journey. Bruh.

"You all (Gen Z) strike me like you want to run past the journey and straight into the destination. Not even relaxing to enjoy the view on the way there," my 40-year-old friend says to me. What's so special about the journey, though? Almost like she was ready for the question, "We know that the destination is great, but knowing you worked to get to the end of your life's journey - whatever you feel that is - is even better. You fought to get where you are right now, and nobody can take away from you the satisfaction of knowing you made it. When you finally get where you're rushing to, those moments along the way that you'd think about will keep you grounded." Food for thought, anyone?

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE REST OF 2022

By Bukola Amoboye



Sometimes it still feels like it was just yesterday we had the pandemic, and the world was on lockdown, but the truth is, it's been two years! 2022 sneaked in and is looking to sneak out just like that. How did we get from Happy New Year, Welcome to 2022, to almost Merry Christmas in the blink of an eye? Who even signed off on November?

You're probably looking at the multiple Happy New Month and Welcome to November messages on your phone in disbelief. Then you remember your New Year Resolutions, but you can't remember all, so you dash to your journal or open the notepad on your phone only to find out that out of fifteen things you wrote down, you only managed to achieve two [inserts crying emoji].

Well, we can't promise you that upon reading this article, you will be able to finish all. We're not magicians. However, we can promise that you will feel less sorry for yourself and more motivated to resume.

So, you're faced with thirteen (13) or so resolutions unattended to and unsure where to pick up from? First, don't close the book. Turn a new page and select three things you think are still achievable within the next six weeks. It's best to start counting what's left of the year in weeks, not months, or you will stay relaxed, thinking you still have time.

Say, for instance, you wanted to learn how to drive. This can be done in three weeks, give or take. Fix a date to start at least three days from when you read this. Avoid procrastination.

Next, set smaller goals. For instance, you set out to lose 25kg this year, but you've only managed to lose 5kg, or maybe you've even added 5kg extra [inserts more crying emoji], set a smaller goal of what you can shed every two weeks. You can set out to lose 2kg every two weeks. With six weeks left, it means you can shed about 6kg before the year ends. Depending on your fitness plan and body metabolism, you might lose more than this, but 6kg is a good enough mark.

In a nutshell, some things will have to be carried over to the next year but getting into the next year ready leaves you feeling empowered. So first, itemize by priority and feasibility, set smaller goals from the original goals, make plans and set those plans in motion as soon as possible. It is recommended that you get started at least three days after you read this, or you risk procrastinating yet again.



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