

VOL. 1 | EDITION 1

The african DIGEST



INTERVIEWS

Exclusive Interview with
Natalie Fort

AFRICAN HISTORY
The History of Ancient Nubia



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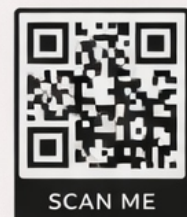


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Thoughts, Vision & Reflections from the Desk of Gustav Addo

Dear Fellow African,
I bring warm and fond greeting from The African Digest.

Look and listen around; there is something remarkable happening across the African continent.

For generations, Africa was too often viewed through the lenses of poverty, conflict, limitation, and dependency. The world looked at Africa and saw only struggle, while overlooking the brilliance of its people, the depth of its culture, the richness of its history, and the immeasurable wealth beneath its soil.

The African proverb "Until the lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter." for me carries even deeper meaning today.

Guess what ? Our Story is changing now.

Africa is rising from the dungeons of misrepresentation and neglect into its rightful place among the Prime Committee of Nations. A continent once underestimated is steadily becoming the center of global attention — not as a continent of pity, but as a continent of promise, power, innovation, and destiny.

From the gold of Ghana to the cobalt of the Congo, from the lithium reserves shaping the future of global technology to the unmatched creativity of African youth, the world is rediscovering what Africa has always possessed: immense value.

Africa is not poor, Africa has never been poor. Africa has only been poorly represented.

Why? Because we left others to tell our stories for us.

And perhaps one of the greatest responsibilities of this generation is to ensure that Africans begin to tell their own stories with confidence, balance, truth, and excellence.

This is the mission of The African Digest – to tell our own stories, and tell them right.

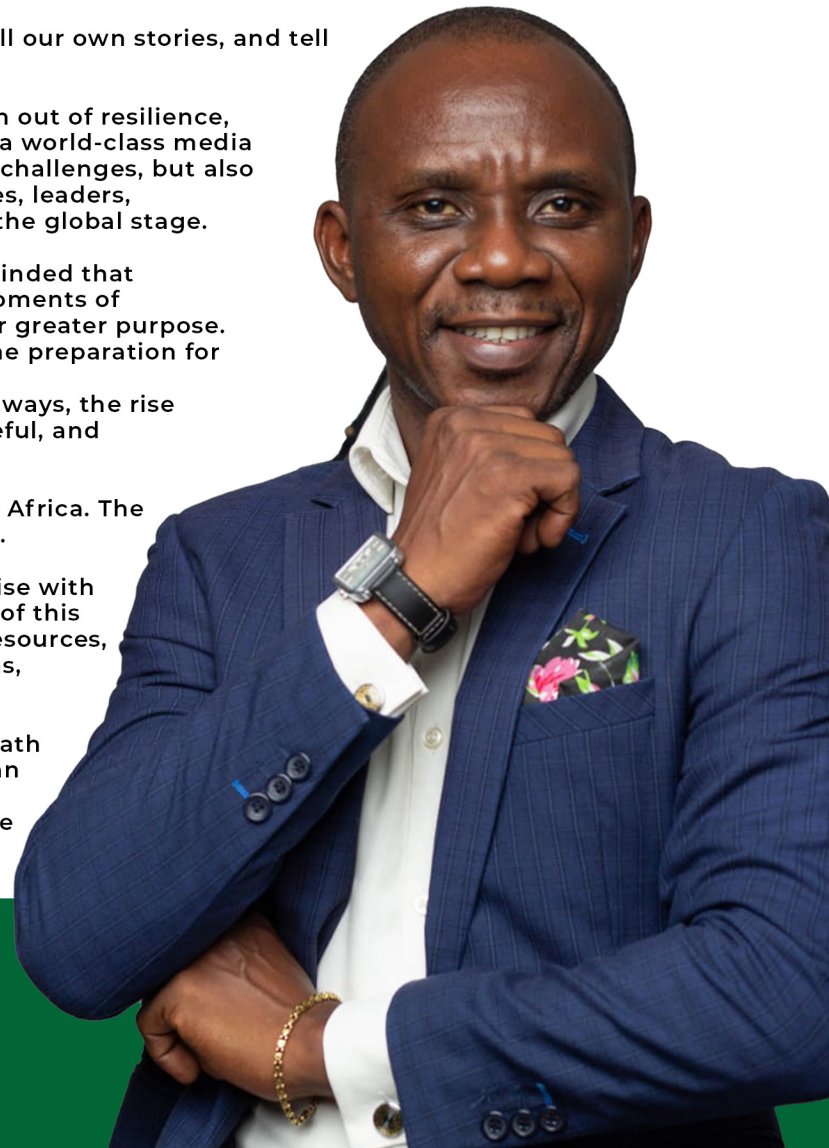
This publication and all our Channels were born out of resilience, vision, and belief — belief that Africa deserves a world-class media platform capable of documenting not only our challenges, but also our victories, aspirations, innovations, industries, leaders, entrepreneurs, and cultural influence shaping the global stage.

As I reflect on this journey personally, I am reminded that setbacks are sometimes divine redirections. Moments of disappointment can become the foundation for greater purpose. What may appear as rejection can often become preparation for something far greater than we imagined. The rise of The African Digest, mirrors in many ways, the rise of Africa itself; Resilient, Determined, Resourceful, and Impossible to ignore.

Today, the world is no longer merely looking at Africa. The world is beginning to look toward Africa better.

And as this new African era unfolds, we must rise with wisdom, unity, integrity, and vision. The future of this continent will not only depend on its natural resources, but also on the strength of its ideas, institutions, media, leadership, and people.

Africa's greatest resource has never been beneath the ground alone. It has always been the African spirit.
Welcome to The African Digest. Welcome to the voice of a rising continent!





We take **iT** personally.



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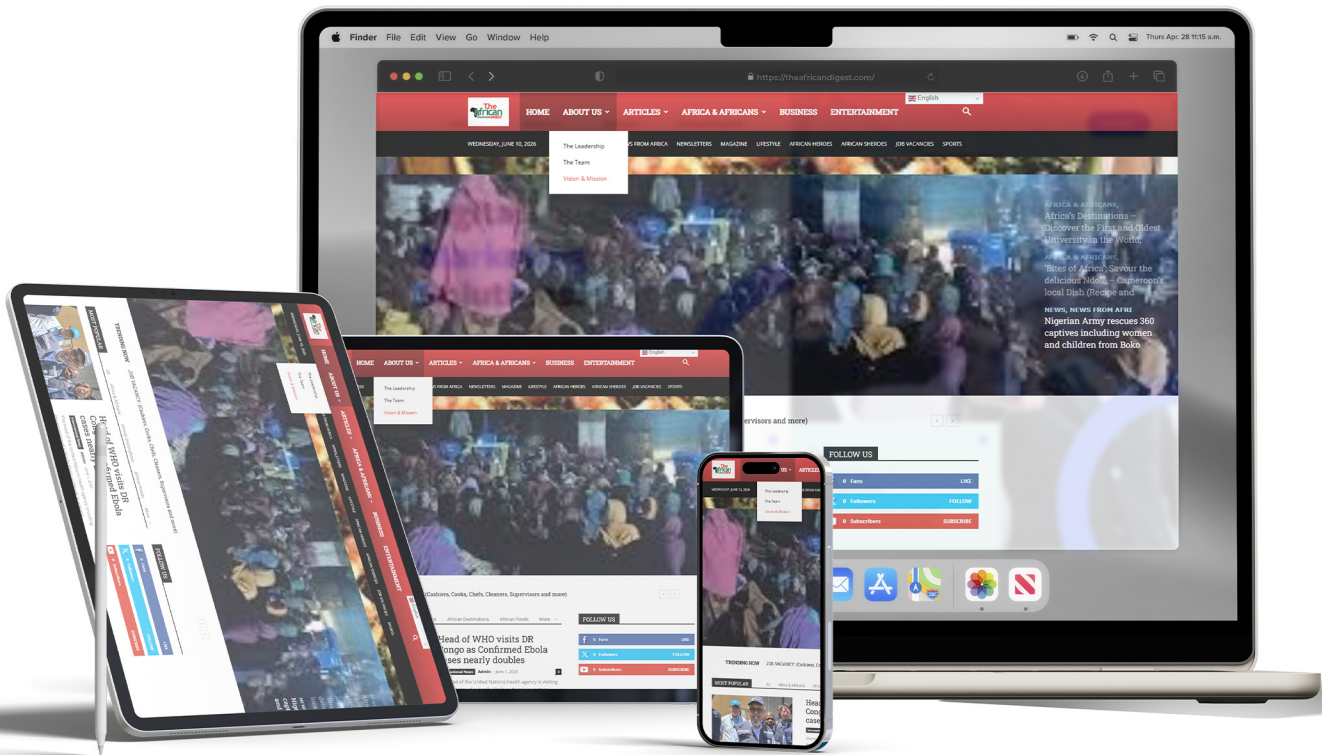
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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH NATALIE FORT

Who is Natalie Fort?



I would describe myself as a communicator, storyteller, actress, entrepreneur, and purpose-driven woman who has spent the last decade using media as a tool for influence, education, and impact. Most people know me as a broadcast journalist and television host, but beyond the cameras, I'm deeply passionate about leadership, global affairs, strategic partnerships, mentorship, philanthropy, and building platforms that create opportunities for others.

I currently serve as a Senior Broadcast Journalist and Foreign Affairs Correspondent with EIB Network in Ghana (GHOne TV & Starr FM), host The Natalie Fort Show, and serve as Global Chair for Media, Arts & Communication at G100. I am also an actress, with projects including House of Klu, where I played the role of Yayra. The series aired on Akwaaba Magic on DStv and became the number one show on Showmax, further expanding its impact across audiences on the continent.

Beyond media, I lead several initiatives under the Fort Group spanning strategic communications, international partnerships, coaching and

and mentorship, art, and business development. I also founded the Fort Foundation, through which we focus on healthcare support, dignity-driven interventions, youth empowerment, and humanitarian impact within vulnerable communities.

At the core of everything I do is a desire to create meaningful impact, shape conversations that matter, and build a legacy that extends beyond visibility into lasting transformation and impact, with an ultimate desire to contribute toward improving and elevating Africa and Africans globally.

For Our Audience In Ghana And Across Africa, Tell Us A Bit About Where You Were Born, And What Your Growing Up Was Like?

I was born and raised in Accra, though my roots are from the Eastern Region of Ghana and I am Akuapem. My upbringing was one that taught me resilience, ambition, and curiosity quite early in life.

Interestingly, contrary to what many people may assume because of the work I do now, I was actually quite reserved, quiet, and introverted growing up. I was very observant and deeply reflective, always paying attention to people, conversations, and the world around me. Even then, I had a strong interest in communication, creativity, storytelling, leadership, and public engagement.

I was not naturally expressive initially, although I enjoyed being in front of the camera. It was really around age 13, when I began modelling and entered the world of pageantry, that I started becoming more confident and comfortable in public spaces. Before that, I experienced bullying during primary school,

which in many ways forced me to build inner strength and self-belief much earlier than expected.

I was also very entrepreneurial as a child. I would constantly try to sell things to my parents or come up with little business ideas. Looking back now, I think that entrepreneurial mindset was always part of who I was.

I come from a generally loving and supportive family, and my mother especially placed strong emphasis on quality international education and exposure. We spent some time with family in the United States when I was much younger before officially beginning school in Ghana. That exposure to different environments at an early age was valuable, but interestingly, it also deepened my appreciation for Ghana and Africa as I grew older. It made me more curious about our identity, our stories, and our place in the world.

Growing up in Ghana gave me a deep appreciation for the brilliance, resilience, creativity, and potential of African people. It's one of the reasons I am so passionate today about changing narratives around Africa globally and contributing toward elevating Africans on the world stage.

Many People Describe Your Journey As A "Meteoric Rise," But What Did The Early, Unseen Years Really Look Like For You?

The truth is, there is always a part of the story people do not see.

People often see the polished version — the television personality, the awards, the visibility, the international engagements — but the unseen years were filled with preparation, discipline, uncertainty, self-doubt, long hours, and constantly having to

prove myself.

I entered the public eye quite young through modelling and pageantry, representing Ghana internationally at a young age, but transitioning into journalism was an entirely different challenge. I quickly realized that visibility alone was never going to be enough. I had to continuously deepen my knowledge, sharpen my understanding of the world, and intentionally grow in credibility, professionalism, and substance.

The early years required immense sacrifice and maturity. I had to learn very quickly, work twice as hard, and consistently show that I deserved to be taken seriously in rooms where people often underestimated me because of my age or preconceived ideas about women in the media. There were also many quiet moments people never saw — moments of exhaustion, emotional pressure, rejection, and trying to balance ambition with personal growth. But I remained deeply committed to improving myself constantly.

What helped me most was consistency, intentionality, and support. I was fortunate to have family and friends who believed in me and encouraged me through different stages of the journey. I also learned a great deal by observing people who came before me — studying how they carried themselves, how they communicated, how they handled pressure, and how they built lasting careers.

Even when opportunities seemed small, I treated them with seriousness and excellence. I approached every role as preparation for something greater. Long before people saw the results publicly, I was already investing heavily in learning, growth, communication skills, leadership, and understanding the power of positioning.

Looking back now, I realize the journey was never truly “overnight.” It was years of unseen preparation meeting visible opportunities.

Early Life & Foundations: What Specific Experiences In Your Childhood Or Teenage Years Shaped Your Confidence And Ambition?

Entering modelling and pageantry and representing Ghana internationally at a young age definitely exposed me to bigger possibilities early. It taught me confidence, discipline, public presentation, and the importance of carrying yourself with purpose.

At the same time, experiences like being bullied during primary school also shaped me deeply. It taught me how to be comfortable with being alone, how to find confidence from within, and not rely on public approval or validation to believe in myself.

Beyond that, I think I always had strong internal ambition. I never saw myself as someone who would only exist in one lane. I've always wanted to build, lead, create, and influence at scale.

Life experiences also matured me emotionally, and becoming a mother deepened my sense of purpose and responsibility in ways I cannot fully explain.

You Entered The Public Eye Quite Early—How Did That Exposure Influence Your Long-Term Vision?

It made me understand very early that visibility is powerful, but substance is what sustains relevance.

I realized that if I wanted longevity, I had to build credibility, intellect, and impact alongside visibility. That understanding shaped many of my decisions later — from journalism, to global affairs reporting, entrepreneurship, and now international leadership work.

It also taught me the importance of staying true to the things I genuinely love and continuing to explore different dimensions of myself creatively and professionally.

That exposure also strengthened my desire to help young people. Through the Natalie Fort Coaching & Mentorship Program, I focus on empowering youth through confidence building, communication, leadership, and personal development. Through Fort Foundation, my team and I also support less privileged individuals and vulnerable communities through humanitarian and dignity-driven interventions.

Breaking Into Media: What Was The Exact Turning Point That Made You Choose Journalism As A Career Path?

“Interestingly, I often say journalism chose me as much as I chose it.”

At the time, I was actually preparing to leave Ghana to study hospitality management abroad. But before that, I was asked at the very last minute by Evelyn Akoto to co-host a pageant event because her female host was suddenly unavailable. I ended up co-hosting the event alongside Kweku Tempeng, who was then a business anchor at TV3 Network.

After the event, he mentioned that TV3 was looking for news anchors and encouraged me to audition. After discussing it with my family, I decided to try. Over 200 people auditioned, and only two of us were selected. For me, that moment felt deeply significant. I genuinely felt God had a plan for me in that field.

Being placed on one of Ghana's biggest prime-time news platforms at just 21 changed everything. That was when I realized journalism combined everything I naturally loved — communication, storytelling, analysis, performance, and influence — and that I wanted to intentionally build a career and legacy within it.

More importantly, I realized the power media has to shape public understanding and national conversations. I didn't just want to entertain people; I wanted to inform, challenge perspectives, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Did You Ever Feel Underestimated Because Of Your Age Or Background? How Did You Handle That?

Absolutely.

When you're young, female, visible, and ambitious, people sometimes assume you are less capable than you actually are. I experienced that multiple times throughout my career.

But I learned early that the best response is excellence. I focused on preparation, professionalism, consistency, and growth. Over time, people may question you initially, but sustained excellence eventually speaks louder than assumptions.

Rise To Prominence: Looking Back, What Were The 2-3 Defining Moments That Accelerated Your Growth In The Media Industry?

One major moment was becoming a lead anchor at TV3 Network relatively early in my career. That experience accelerated my growth tremendously and exposed me to high-pressure broadcasting environments very quickly.

Another defining period was transitioning into more in-depth conversations and thought leadership through The Natalie Fort Show. The show allowed me to move beyond traditional news delivery into deeper human, developmental, and societal conversations.

A third major shift has been my work in foreign affairs and international reporting — covering major global conversations at platforms like the United Nations and international summits. That expanded my perspective beyond Ghana and positioned me within broader global conversations.

What Sacrifices Did You Have To Make To Get To Where You Are Today?

Time, rest, emotional comfort, and sometimes personal balance.

Media is demanding. Leadership is demanding. Public life is demanding. There are many moments people don't see — exhaustion, pressure, disappointment, uncertainty, and constantly having to show up regardless.

I've also had to sacrifice privacy to some degree. Once you become a public figure, people often feel entitled to opinions about your life. But over time, I've learned how to better protect my peace while still remaining authentic.

Preparation for me is extremely intentional.

Excellence & Work Ethic: What Does "Preparation" Look Like For You Before You Go On Air Or Host A Major Interview?

"Preparation for me is extremely intentional."

I research extensively, study personalities, understand context, review data, anticipate angles, and mentally prepare for the flow of the conversation. I believe great interviews happen when preparation meets genuine curiosity.

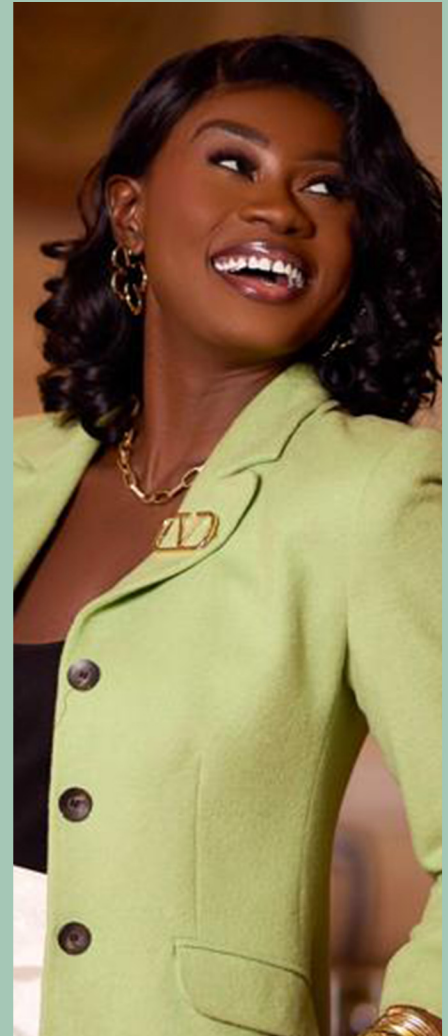
Even after ten years in media, I still prepare seriously because professionalism is built on discipline, not assumptions.

How Do You Maintain Credibility And Depth In An Era Where Speed Often Overrides Accuracy?

I remind myself constantly that credibility is currency in journalism.

In today's digital age, there's pressure to be first, but I believe it's more important to be accurate, responsible, and thoughtful. Audiences eventually learn who they can trust.

I also believe journalists must continuously educate themselves and evolve intellectually. The world is changing rapidly, and media professionals cannot afford intellectual stagnation.



The Natalie Fort Show & Thought Leadership: What Gap Did You See In Ghana's Media Landscape That Led To The Natalie Fort Show?

I wanted to create a platform that balanced substance, humanity, development, and inspiration. There are many conversations happening in society that deserve more depth and empathy. I wanted a space where we could discuss leadership, entrepreneurship, governance, culture, personal journeys, and social impact in a more meaningful way.

I'm proud that The Natalie Fort Show has evolved into a respected platform for thoughtful conversations and storytelling.

Have There Been Interviews That Fundamentally Changed Your Own Perspective?

Absolutely. Some interviews humble you. Some educate you. Some completely shift your understanding of resilience, leadership, inequality, or humanity itself.

Honestly, I believe every person I interview has something to teach me. One of the greatest gifts journalism has given me is the opportunity to constantly learn through other people's stories and lived experiences.

"I've always believed influence should evolve into institution building."

Entrepreneurship & Building The Fort Brand: You've Successfully Expanded Beyond Journalism Into Business—What Inspired That Transition?

I've always believed influence should evolve into institution building.

Media gave me visibility, but entrepreneurship gave me the ability to create systems, opportunities, partnerships, and long-term impact beyond myself.

Through the Fort Group, we are building across strategic communications, global partnerships, leadership development, philanthropy, coaching, and creative industries. I wanted to build something bigger than personal fame — something sustainable, impactful, and capable of creating opportunities for others.

What Has Been Your Biggest Failure Or Setback As An Entrepreneur, And What Did It Teach You?

One lesson entrepreneurship taught me is that vision alone is not enough. Structure, systems, timing, and the right people matter greatly. There were moments where I overextended myself trying to do too much personally.

I've learned the importance of delegation, operational systems, patience, and protecting your energy as a founder.

Setbacks taught me strategic thinking and emotional resilience.

Impact, Purpose & Philanthropy: What Moment Made You Realize Your Platform Could Drive Real Social Impact?

I think it became real when I started seeing how visibility could directly influence lives — whether through advocacy, fundraising, mentorship, or connecting people to opportunities.

That realization changed how I viewed my platform. I understood that influence should not only benefit the individual holding it.

Through Your Foundation And Mentorship, What Problem Are You Most Passionate About Solving In Ghana?

Through Fort Foundation and my mentorship initiatives, I'm passionate about empowerment, dignity, confidence building, youth development, and access to opportunity.

I'm particularly passionate about helping young people — especially young women — believe they can occupy leadership spaces confidently while also providing tangible support where possible.

Healthcare support, mentorship, communication skills, confidence, and leadership development are areas very close to my heart.

Influence, Power & Responsibility: As Your Influence Grows, How Do You Stay Grounded And Authentic?

I remind myself constantly that public recognition is temporary, but character and impact are lasting.

My faith grounds me deeply. I'm a Christian and Catholic, and that spiritual foundation has played a major role in how I navigate life, pressure, purpose, and growth.

Motherhood grounds me. Family grounds me. Purpose grounds me. I also intentionally protect spaces where I can simply be Natalie away from public expectations.

Most importantly, I don't do anything that doesn't feel aligned with who I am at my core.

Do You Ever Feel Pressure To Represent More Than Just Yourself—As A Woman, As A Ghanaian, As A Public Figure?

Definitely.

There's always an awareness that people are watching not only what you achieve, but how you carry yourself. As African women in leadership and media, we often carry both opportunity and responsibility simultaneously. But I try not to let that pressure become limiting. I see it more as motivation to represent excellence authentically.

What Responsibility Do Media Personalities Have In Shaping National Conversations?

A huge responsibility.

Media personalities influence perception, culture, public opinion, and even national priorities. That influence must be handled responsibly. We must understand the power words, narratives, and visibility carry.

Personal Growth & Resilience: What Has Been Your Lowest Moment In Your Career, And How Did You Navigate It?

There have been moments of exhaustion, disappointment, and uncertainty that people never saw publicly.

But difficult seasons taught me resilience and reinvention. I've learned that growth sometimes requires uncomfortable transitions.

Faith, self-reflection, and purpose helped me navigate difficult periods.

How Do You Deal With Criticism, Public Scrutiny, Or Misinformation About You?

Public life teaches you emotional discipline very quickly.

I've learned not to internalize every opinion. Some criticism helps you grow; some is simply noise. The key is staying focused on truth, growth, and purpose without becoming consumed by public narratives.

What Habits Or Routines Have Been Critical To Your Personal Growth?

Continuous learning, self-reflection, discipline, prayer, protecting my peace, and surrounding myself with people who challenge me positively.

I also believe growth requires intentional reinvention. You cannot evolve if you remain attached to older versions of yourself forever.

Legacy & The Future: When All Is Said And Done, How Do You Want Your Work And Influence To Be Remembered?

I want to be remembered as someone who used communication, leadership, and influence to create meaningful impact — someone who opened doors, shaped important conversations, empowered others, and built institutions beyond herself.

What Is The Next Evolution Of Natalie Fort That People Are Not Seeing Yet?

I think people are beginning to see glimpses of it already — global leadership, international partnerships, diplomacy, institution building, mentorship, and creative expansion beyond traditional broadcasting.

I'm entering a season focused not only on visibility, but legacy, systems, and global influence.

"Talent may open doors, but substance sustains relevance."

If A Young Ghanaian Girl Wants To Follow Your Path, What Should She Focus On Beyond Talent?

Discipline, character, confidence, emotional intelligence, communication skills, and continuous learning.

Talent may open doors, but substance sustains relevance.

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP & G100 APPOINTMENT

Congratulations On Your Appointment As Global Chair For Media Arts And Communications At G100.

What Does This Role Mean To You Personally And Professionally At This Stage Of Your Journey?

Thank you.

Serving as Global Chair for Media, Arts & Communications at G100 is both an honour and a significant responsibility.

Personally, it represents growth, trust, and global recognition of the work I've done over the years in media and leadership. Professionally, it expands my ability to influence conversations at an international level while creating opportunities for collaboration across countries. It also reflects my belief that African women deserve stronger representation in global leadership spaces.

What Specific Responsibilities Come With This Position, And What Impact Are You Hoping To Make On A Global Scale?

The role involves helping shape global conversations around media equity, communication, leadership, representation, collaboration,

and opportunities for women within media and creative industries. I hope to build stronger international networks, amplify underrepresented voices, foster meaningful collaborations, and create practical opportunities for women globally — particularly from emerging economies.

I also hope to strengthen Africa's voice within global media conversations.

How Do You See Media, Arts, And Communications Shaping Global Narratives, Especially For Women And Emerging Economies Like Ghana And How Can Young African Women In Media Plug Into Opportunities Created Through Your Work With G100?

Media and communication shape how nations, cultures, and people are perceived globally. Whoever controls narratives often influences power.

Africa has incredible stories, brilliance, creativity, innovation, and leadership that deserve stronger global visibility. Women especially must move from being subjects of narratives to becoming architects of narratives.

Through my work with G100, I hope to create mentorship pipelines, collaborative projects, training opportunities, international visibility, and stronger cross-border partnerships for young African women in media and communications.

Bridging Local Impact With Global Influence: How Will Your Role At G100 Influence Your Work Back Home In Ghana, Particularly Your Media Projects And Foundation?

It expands the scale of possibility.

It creates opportunities to connect Ghanaian and African talent, conversations, and initiatives to global platforms. I believe local impact becomes stronger when connected to global networks strategically.

I also hope it will strengthen the developmental and leadership focus of many of my projects, including mentorship, media, and philanthropy.

Do You See This Appointment Changing The Direction Or Scale Of The Natalie Fort Show Or Your Broader Brand?

Yes, I believe it naturally expands the scale and direction.

I see stronger international conversations, deeper policy and leadership engagement, broader partnerships, and more global storytelling becoming part of the evolution of both The Natalie Fort Show and the broader Fort brand.

Vision & Legacy (G100 Angle): Per Your Role At G100, What Tangible Change Would You Like To Be Remembered For?

I would like to be remembered for helping create a truly influential global platform that connected women meaningfully across borders — not just symbolically, but through real opportunities, mentorship, visibility, partnerships, and leadership advancement.

I also hope to contribute toward shifting how African women in media and leadership are perceived globally.

Vision & Legacy (G100 Angle): Per Your Role At G100, What Tangible Change Would You Like To Be Remembered For?

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SIGNATURE CLOSING QUESTION

If You Had To Define Your Journey In One Sentence—Not The Headline Version, But The Truth—What Would It Be?

A journey of resilience, reinvention, faith, and purpose — where every challenge became preparation for greater impact.

Natalie Fort is Senior Broadcast Journalist and Foreign Affairs Correspondent with EIB Network in Ghana (GHOne TV & Starr FM) and the host of 'The Natalie Fort Show'.

Natalie Fort serves as Global Chair for Media, Arts & Communication at G100. The "G100" refers to the G100: Group of 100 Global Women Leaders, an action-oriented think tank and global network of influential women dedicated to advancing gender equality, inclusivity, and economic empowerment worldwide.

Natalie Fort is, and has consistently proven to be one of the most exemplary Media professionals within Ghana and across the African Continent. Her personal and professional life continue to be a guiding light for young girls, ladies and women coming up in the world. Natalie Fort is also an active mentor to girls, and ladies via her Natalie Fort Foundation.



dds55: Built in Ghana, Engineered for Africa

Dynamic Data Solutions LTD (dds55) is a fully Ghanaian-owned technology company providing enterprise connectivity, cybersecurity, cloud, and systems integration services. Headquartered in Accra, the company serves large enterprises, government agencies, financial institutions, and telecom providers across Ghana and the wider African market. Its operating philosophy is built on a simple conviction: that the best technology outcomes happen when strong engineering is matched with genuine care for the people it serves.

The company has over twenty years of history in Ghana. It began in 2003 as Accelon, delivering satellite-based internet. Following acquisition by Dimension Data in 2008, the Ghanaian operation became the fastest-growing subsidiary within the global group by 2015. Later when NTT of Japan acquired Dimension Data, the local team gained exposure to one of the world's largest technology services organisations. Through each transition, the company retained its core team and its commitment to long-term client relationships. In 2023, Yvette Adounvo Atekpe who had been Managing Director of Dimension Data Ghana spanning 17 years acquired Dimension Data Ghana through an MBO as Dynamic Data Solutions and launched as an independent brand (dds55) in 2024 — carrying two decades of global experience and a culture of partnership into a locally owned company.

dds55 operates a 40Gbps, 250-kilometre metro fibre network across Accra and Tema, with radio and VSAT coverage extending to all sixteen regions. International bandwidth runs through three undersea cable systems — ACE, WACS, and 2Africa — providing the geographic diversity and redundancy required for enterprise-grade reliability. The company guarantees 99.9% network availability, backed by proactive monitoring that identifies and resolves issues before they reach the client.

The service portfolio spans six areas: connectivity, cyber and information security, cloud solutions, data centre services, systems integration, and managed services. On the security front, dds55 holds MSSP accreditation and ISO 27001 certification, with

a Security Operations Centre providing round-the-clock monitoring. Rather than offering standardised packages, the company takes a telco-agnostic approach, working closely with each client to design bundled solutions around their specific operational needs. Partnerships with NTT, Microsoft, Fortinet, Cisco, and Palo Alto provide access to leading technologies without compromising that client-first independence.

Behind the technology is a team of certified engineers supported by a 24/7 Network Operations Centre support operation with an average response time under 30 minutes. The company places significant emphasis on building meaningful, long-term partnerships with clients rather than transactional vendor relationships. Every engagement is managed with the understanding that reliable technology is only as valuable as the people standing behind it — people who understand the client’s business context, respond when it matters, and take ownership of outcomes.

This approach has earned the Company consistent recognition. dds55 has received twelve industry awards, including multiple consecutive Internet Service Provider of the Year titles from CIMG Ghana and the Ghana IT & Telecom Awards. Recent honours include Outstanding Contribution to ICT, ICT Solutions Company of the Year, Marketing Oriented ISP of the Year, and Cybersecurity CEO of the Year for founder Yvette Adounvo Atekpe. Notably, the Marketing Oriented ISP award reflects the company’s deliberate focus on client experience and communication — not just technical delivery.

As African enterprises navigate digital transformation and tightening cybersecurity regulation, dds55 offers a clear proposition: global-grade technology capabilities, locally owned, locally accountable, and delivered by people who treat every client’s business as if it were their own.

Technology that delivers. People who care.



DR CONGO PRESIDENT LIKELY TO GO ON FOR 3RD TERM AS PRESIDENT

Democratic Republic of Congo's President Félix Tshisekedi has said he may consider seeking a third term in office when his mandate expires in 2028.

Tshisekedi has however said any extension of his presidency would only be done by consulting the people through a referendum. The law allows a maximum of two terms.

"I have not asked for a third term, but I'm telling you - if the people want me to have a third term, I will accept," he said recently.

He also added that the elections may not be held on schedule because of the conflict in the east of the country. M23 rebels last year seized control of swathes of the North and South Kivu regions, including the key cities of Goma and Bukavu. Tshisekedi said voting could not be organized without the two regions, adding that the timing of the elections would depend on how quickly the conflict is resolved.

"If we cannot end this war, unfortunately, we will not be able to hold the elections in 2028," Tshisekedi said at a press conference, just his second in the capital, Kinshasa, since being re-elected to office in 2023.

Tshisekedi has insisted that his priority was to restore peace through diplomacy before leaving office, but blamed Rwanda for obstructing progress. He has however, accused Rwanda of

profiting from DR Congo's rich mineral resources and dragging its feet on implementing the agreement signed in Washington in December.

"It's going to take time, because Rwanda has long profited by looting resources, and that's why the negotiations are dragging on," he said.

He also addressed the recent sanctioning by the US of his predecessor, Joseph Kabila, for allegedly supporting rebel groups. He has described the situation as "a real mess", lamenting that those who were once hailed as architects of democratic change had become "gravediggers".

Tshisekedi's remarks on extending his term follow recent accusations from the opposition and other groups that he is manoeuvring to stay in power beyond his two-term limit.

The opposition have warned that any attempt to amend the constitution would amount to a "constitutional coup".



MALAWI PLACES BAN ON THE EXPORT OF RAW MINERALS FROM THE COUNTRY

Malawi has announced a sweeping ban on the export of raw minerals, a move President Peter Mutharika says will mark a new chapter in the nation's economic independence. The country has now banned all raw mineral exports to promote local processing and industrial growth. President Mutharika says the move could generate up to \$500 million annually. The Policy targets key deposits, including rutile in Kasiya and rare earths in Kangankunde.

Analysts have however warned that the success of this new move will depend greatly on strong enforcement and investment in infrastructure.

The new policy, which takes immediate effect, aims to keep resource wealth within Malawi and could capture up to \$500 million annually through domestic processing.

In the President's words *"I will not allow exportation of raw materials from our mines,"* Mutharika declared during a cabinet swearing-in ceremony at Sanjika Palace in Blantyre.

"Raw materials have to be processed here. We must stop exporting opportunity and start building industries." The ban is said to affect major mining zones, such as the rutile deposits in Kasiya and the rare-earth sites at Kangankunde.

Malawi's mineral portfolio, ranging from uranium and bauxite to graphite, coal, and precious gemstones, positions the country as a potential beneficiation hub in Southern Africa.

President Mutharika, who was just recently re-elected to a fresh term, has described the measure as a *"cornerstone of economic nationalism"* and urged new cabinet members to deliver tangible results.

But while the announcement has stirred national pride, economists caution that success will depend on infrastructure, technology, and enforcement.

Across Africa, similar resource bans have produced mixed results. Zimbabwe's 2023 lithium export ban spurred smuggling across the Mozambique border, while Tanzania's 2017 gold restrictions pushed miners into illegal markets, hurting state revenues. Malawi's gamble reflects a wider continental shift toward value addition, one that could redefine Africa's role in the global supply chain if executed effectively.

For now, all eyes are on Lilongwe to see whether Mutharika's bold bet on beneficiation can turn the nation's mineral wealth into real, lasting prosperity.

SOUTH AFRICA - XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE, THE HISTORY AND THE 'ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM'



For nearly two decades, South Africa has suffered recurring bouts of xenophobic attacks. From deadly riots in 2008 to the rise of Operation Dudula, thousands of foreign nationals have been displaced time and again. For more than two decades, South Africa has had to reckon with repeated outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence targeting mainly migrants and refugees from neighboring nations and other parts of the African continent.

Critics say that political rhetoric around immigration, combined with deep economic frustration, has helped fuel this sense of hostility toward foreigners; time and again, foreign nationals have been beaten, displaced, killed and had their businesses looted in various parts of the country.

A brief look at how xenophobia in South Africa has evolved over the years.

Rising tensions after apartheid (1994–2007)

After the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa became a major destination for migrants seeking work and stability. Many arrived from neighboring countries that faced economic collapse, conflict or political repression. At the

same time, South Africa struggled with soaring unemployment, inequality and increasingly poor services while the government's focus was largely on nation-building during this fresh chapter. But while political power structures shifted, much of the country's wealth, land and major businesses have remained concentrated in the hands of a white minority, leaving the deep economic inequalities inherited by decades of segregation largely unchanged.

A 2021 World Bank study found that the richest 10% of South Africans — predominantly white — still own more than 85% of the country's wealth.

Attacks on migrants in townships started becoming more prevalent during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Foreign shop owners were accused of "stealing jobs" or undercutting local businesses, especially in the informal economy.

The First Explosion Of Attacks On Foreigners (2008)

In May 2008, xenophobic violence erupted in the Alexandra township near Johannesburg before spreading across the country.

According to the UN refugee agency UNHCR, at least 62 people were killed, more than 670 injured and over 100,000 displaced during the attacks. Many of the victims were migrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Somalia. One of the most infamous images of the violence showed Mozambican migrant Ernesto Nhamuave being burned alive by a mob in the Ramaphosa informal settlement near Boksburg.

South African President Thabo Mbeki condemned the attacks, saying at the time that no one *"in our society has any right to ... explain naked criminal activity by cloaking it in the garb of xenophobia."*

However, Mbeki's administration was heavily criticized for this approach, with many commentators labeling his administration's frequent framing of such attacks as opportunistic criminal acts rather than the result of deep-seated anti-immigrant sentiment as *"denialism."*

Human Rights Watch later said the string of attacks had exposed *"deep-rooted intolerance and poor local governance."*

Further Attacks In Durban And Johannesburg (2015)

Another major wave of violence broke out in 2015, mainly in the cities of Durban and Johannesburg. Countless foreign-owned shops were looted and burned.

According to Human Rights Watch, at least seven people were killed and thousands displaced during this wave of attacks. The violence followed controversial remarks attributed to the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, who reportedly said at the time that foreigners should *"pack their bags and leave."*

The late king later denied encouraging the violence.

Several African countries organized evacuations for those wanting to leave South Africa during these turbulent times: Neighboring Zimbabwe sent buses to bring its nationals home, while Malawi and Mozambique also assisted returnees with logistics.



Nigerians Targeted Amid Diplomatic Fallout (2019)

In September 2019, violence swept through parts of Johannesburg and Pretoria again. According to South African police figures cited by Reuters, at least 12 people were killed, and hundreds of businesses looted or destroyed. Nigeria evacuated more than 500 of its citizens from South Africa.

The attacks triggered a diplomatic crisis across Africa, with Nigeria even temporarily boycotting the World Economic Forum on Africa hosted in Cape Town.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa then, condemned the violence, saying that there *"is no justification for any South African to attack people from other countries."* Yet critics again argued that the government continued to frame the unrest as being rooted in crime rather than calling it out as xenophobia.

The Rise Of Operation Dudula (2021-2022)

The anti-migrant group Operation Dudula emerged in the township of Soweto in 2021, and quickly garnered national attention for its ambitions. The group organized marches against undocumented migrants, conducted raids on businesses and accused foreigners of taking jobs from South Africans while overburdening public services.

Human rights organizations accused Operation Dudula of fueling vigilantism and xenophobia, as well as blocking foreign nationals from accessing healthcare, schools, and informal trading spaces.

Zandile Dabula, the leader of Operation Dudula, indicated at the time: *"The escalating crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, that's bad,"* linking these phenomena to foreign nationals while insisting that the group only sought to fight irregular immigration and crime.

The group later even registered as a political party ahead of the 2024 elections, and has been growing since, alongside other anti-migrant movements.

And Still 'South Africans Are Not Xenophobic' ? (2024-2026)

Tensions around immigration have remained high, particularly against the backdrop of South Africa's escalating economic crisis: South Africa's official unemployment rate stood at nearly 33% in the first quarter of 2025, according to Statistics South Africa, while youth unemployment remained above 45%.

Fresh outbreaks of violence in 2026 have triggered protests from leaders in Ghana and Nigeria, with a renewed criticism of South Africa's handling of xenophobia. Nigeria's Foreign Minister Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu stressed: *"Nigerian lives and businesses in SA must not continue to be put at risk."*

Nigeria has meanwhile expanded its official response to the latest attacks by announcing a *"voluntary repatriation"* program for its nationals after two were killed as part of the recurring violence.

South Africa's presidential spokesperson Vincent Magwenya has however rejected claims that widespread xenophobia has resurfaced in the country, stating that *"South Africans are not xenophobic."*

He has said that what is being observed are merely *"pockets of protest, which is permissible within our constitutional framework."*



Why then are foreigners being targeted again?

Around the world, migrants are frequently cast as scapegoats for deeper structural problems, reaching from inequality and corruption to weak economic growth and state failure.

In South Africa, this scapegoating has overwhelmingly targeted Black and African migrants, who make up more than two-thirds of South Africa's estimated 3 million foreign residents.

Many observers warn that the country's problem with xenophobic violence has become cyclical, resurfacing whenever economic or political pressures intensify and revealing how quickly hardship can be turned into hostility.



The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) has condemned the xenophobic attacks and vigilante conduct perpetrated on nationals of other African countries in the Republic of South Africa.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission), through the Country Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Commissioner Solomon Ayele Dersso, expressed grave concern over recent reports of xenophobic violence and acts of intimidation against nationals of other African countries in South Africa.

Furthermore, the Commission reiterated that the responsibility to enforce immigration laws rests solely with duly authorized State institutions, and that any form of vigilante justice or mob action constitutes a violation of the rule of law and undermines the State's human rights obligations.

While noting public statements by South African authorities condemning unlawful conduct, the Commission emphasizes that such expressions must be accompanied by prompt, concrete, and sustained measures to prevent recurrence and ensure accountability.

So this behooves the question, are South Africans xenophobic or not? Looking at the history of xenophobia in the country, one is tempted to deduce so. Again, let's ask ourselves which other African Country has the frequency and alarming rate as the level of xenophobia that goes on in South Africa?

If even Prominent South Africans like the Political Leader Julius Malema, Leader of the EFF and Global Speaker, Venture Capitalist and Entrepreneur, Vuzi Thembekwayo condemn these xenophobic attacks then can we look deeper and play the devil's advocate?

Now, the Elephant in the room is – Are South Africans really and truly xenophobic, or is there a much hidden agenda to divide Africans through South Africa using the divide and rule system like used to be done in earlier colonial times. These questions I leave to you our dear reader to answer.

Alternate Sources: DW Africa, African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR)

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WULING



TAIWAN'S PRESIDENT PAYS VISIT TO KING OF ESWATINI DESPITE CHINA'S DISAPPROVAL AND BACKLASH

The President of Taiwan, Lai Ching-te paid a surprise visit to the King of Eswatini, His Royal Highness King Mswati III to strengthen ties between the two nations. The visit which was a surprise one has got China bickering and backlashing at this visit in certain terms, especially with unsavoury comments which indicate the depth of their displeasure.

Lai arrived in the former Swaziland (Eswatini), home to around 1.3 million people on a trip neither government had announced beforehand, having taken an Eswatini government aircraft.

President Lai Ching-te however told Eswatini's king, *"Taiwan has a right to engage with the world and no country can stop that"*, after he arrived for a surprise trip that Taipei says Beijing tried to stop, as China condemned him as a *"rat"*.

China views democratically governed Taiwan as part of its territory with no right to state-to-state ties, a position Taiwan's government strongly disputes, and Beijing has demanded countries stop any engagements with the island.

"The Republic of China, Taiwan, is a sovereign nation and a Taiwan that belongs to the world," Lai told the king, referring to Taiwan's official name, in comments provided by the presidential office on Sunday.

"The 23 million people of Taiwan have the right to engage with the world, and no country has the right — nor should any country attempt — to prevent Taiwan from contributing to the world."

The *"arrive then announce"* model is commonly used in high-level international diplomacy, minimizing the *"uncertain risks of potential interference from external forces"*, a senior Taiwan security official said, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue.

In unsavoury words, a spokesman of China said *"Lai Ching-te's despicable conduct — like a rat scurrying across the street — will inevitably be met with ridicule by the international community,"* *"The Taiwan Affairs Office's fishwife's gutter talk is boring in the extreme,"* he added.

Taiwan's China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council said Lai did not need Beijing's permission to go anywhere.

DUTCH CRUISE SHIP WITH HANTAVIRUS OUTBREAK IDENTIFIED AND QUARANTINED

A Dutch cruise ship with a Hantavirus outbreak has been identified and quarantined.

The Dutch cruise ship MV Hondius, which experienced a deadly Hantavirus outbreak, set sail from Ushuaia, Argentina, on April 1, 2026, on an expedition aimed toward Antarctica and the South Atlantic. The vessel later traveled across the Atlantic toward Cape Verde, with passengers having visited areas in Argentina before boarding.

Two crew members, including the ship's reportedly British doctor, require urgent medical care and were due to be evacuated on a hospital aircraft to the Canary Islands on Tuesday. A third person linked to a German national who died was also due to be evacuated.

Seven cases of Hantavirus – two confirmed and five suspected – have so far been identified in people who were on the ship, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) update.

The two confirmed cases were a Dutch woman, who is among those who died, and a 69-year-old UK national who was evacuated to South Africa for medical treatment. The woman's husband also died but he is not a confirmed case, nor is the German national who passed away on 2 May.

Aside from the British crew member, there are 22 other British nationals on board.

The Cruise operator, Oceanwide Expeditions said its plan was to sail to "*Gran Canaria or Tenerife*".

It said the World Health Organization (WHO) had explained that Cape Verde "*cannot carry out this operation*".

Hantavirus is usually spread from rodents, but the WHO has said it could have spread among "*really close contacts*" aboard the ship. However, it stressed the risk to the public was low at the time.



THE US – ISRAEL - IRAN CONFLICT AND WAR: THE HISTORY AND CRITICAL MATTERS ARISEN

As of May 2026, the United States and Israel are engaged in an active, open-ended war with Iran, initiated by widespread strikes on February 28, 2026, targeting Iranian nuclear and military infrastructure. The conflict, marked by the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and ongoing regional retaliation, stems from decades of escalating tensions and the failure of diplomatic efforts.

The Attack (Operation Epic Fury) began on February 28, 2026, US and Israeli forces initiated major strikes, targeting air defenses, missile sites, and leadership. Long-time Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed in the initial strikes; his son, Mojtaba Khamenei, was subsequently named as his successor.

Iran has hence retaliated with drone and missile attacks on US facilities in Kuwait and in the Strait of Hormuz as a retaliation, leading to an escalation of the crisis. And the Trump administration has cited the destruction of Iran's nuclear program and the facilitation of regime change as primary goals, following the breakdown of the JCPOA and "*maximum pressure*" tactics.

The war has included massive airstrikes, with Israel conducting over 10,800 strikes and the US conducting over 13,000 against military targets, according to American Jewish Committee reports.

Several attempts at a ceasefire are stalled, with Trump recently describing a proposed deal as on "life support" and Iran demanding compensation for damages.



Historical Background Of The Conflict

The US-Iran enmity began with the CIA-backed overthrow of democratically elected Prime Minister Mosaddegh, who nationalized the oil industry, re-installing the pro-Western Shah during the 1953 coup.

And during the 1979 Revolution, Iranians overthrew the Shah, creating a theocracy, and held 52 Americans hostage, cementing decades of hostility.

It is very important to note that The US supported Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and has long aimed to reduce Iranian influence in the region.

The central flashpoint now, has been Iran's nuclear program, which the US insists is for weapons, while Iran maintains it is for peaceful purposes, leading to severe sanctions and the collapse of the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) in 2018.

The Earlier History Of Iran - US Relations

Relations between Iran and the United States in modern-day are unsettled and have a troubled history. They began in the mid-to-late 19th century, when Iran was known to the Western world as Qajar Persia. Persia was very wary of British and Russian colonial interests during the Great Game. By contrast, the United States was seen as a more trustworthy foreign power, and the Americans Arthur Millspaugh and Morgan Shuster were even appointed treasurers-general by the Shahs of the time. During World War II, Iran was invaded by the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, both US allies, but relations continued to be positive after the war until the later years of the government of Mohammad Mosaddegh, who was overthrown by a coup organized by the Central Intelligence Agency and aided by M.I.6. This was followed by an era of close alliance between Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's authoritarian regime and the US government, Iran being one of the US's closest allies during the Cold War, which was in turn followed by a dramatic reversal and disagreement between the two countries after the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

The two nations have had no formal diplomatic relations since April 7, 1980. Instead, Pakistan serves as Iran's protecting power in the United States, while Switzerland serves as the United States' protecting power in Iran. Contacts are carried out through the Iranian Interests Section of the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, D.C., and the US Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy in Tehran. In August 2018, the former Supreme Leader



of Iran Ali Khamenei banned direct talks with the United States. According to the US Department of Justice, Iran has since attempted to assassinate US officials and dissidents, including US president Donald Trump.

Iran's explanations for the animosity with the United States on the other hand include *"the natural and unavoidable conflict between the Islamic system"* and *"such an oppressive power as the United States, which is trying to establish a global dictatorship and further its own interests by dominating other nations and trampling on their rights"*, as well as the United States support for Israel (*"the Zionist entity"*). In the West, however, various explanations have been considered, including the Iranian government's need for an external bogeyman to furnish a pretext for domestic repression against pro-democratic forces and to bind the government to its loyal constituency. The United States attributes the worsening of relations to the 1979–81 Iran hostage crisis, Iran's repeated human rights abuses since the Islamic Revolution, different restrictions on using spy methods on democratic revolutions by the US, its anti-Western ideology, its nuclear program, and political, financial, and military support to armed groups committed primarily to countering the influence of US and Israel in the West Asia.

Since 1995, the United States has had an embargo on trade with Iran. It is quite interesting though that relations between the two countries tend to improve when the two countries have overlapping goals, such as repelling Sunni militants during the Iraq War and the intervention against the Islamic State in the region. In 2015, the United States led successful negotiations for a nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) intended to place substantial limits on Iran's nuclear program, including IAEA inspections and limitations on enrichment levels. In 2016, most sanctions against Iran were lifted. The Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear

deal and re-imposed sanctions in 2018, initiating what became known as the *"maximum pressure campaign"* against Iran. In response, Iran gradually reduced its commitments under the nuclear deal and eventually exceeded pre-JCPOA enrichment levels. The Biden administration did not relax the economic sanctions against Iran, and instead implemented more measures.



The second Trump administration then reimposed the *"maximum pressure"* approach on Iran. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent labelled the collapse of the Iranian currency in December 2025 as the *"grand culmination"* of this strategy.

On February 28, 2026, Israel and the United States launched a joint attack on various sites in Iran. The operation, codenamed 'Roaring Lion' by Israel and Operation Epic Fury by the United States Department of Defense, targeted key officials, military commanders, facilities and was aimed at regime change. The attack included the assassination of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

History Of Early Relations

American newspapers in the 1720s were uniformly pro-Iranian, especially during the revolt of Afghan emir Mahmud Hotak (r. 1722–1725) against the Safavid dynasty.

Political relations between Qajar Persia and the United States began when the Shah of Iran, Nassereddin Shah Qajar, officially dispatched Iran's first ambassador, Mirza Abolhasan, to Washington, D.C. in 1856. In 1883, Samuel G. W. Benjamin was appointed by the United States as

the first official diplomatic envoy to Iran; however, ambassadorial relations were not established until 1944.



The US had little interest in Persian affairs, while the US as a trustworthy outsider did not suffer. The Persians again sought the US for help in straightening out its finances after World War I. This mission was opposed by powerful vested interests and eventually was withdrawn with its task incomplete.

Details Of The 2026 Crisis

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched a large-scale joint military operation against Iran, codenamed Operation Epic Fury by the US and 'Operation Roaring Lion' by Israel. Trump announced the operation in a video statement, stating the objectives were to destroy Iran's ballistic missile program, prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, and ultimately bring about regime change in Iran. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said the strikes aimed to remove "the existential threat posed by the terrorist regime in Iran." The Israeli Defense Forces stated that approximately 200 fighter jets struck around 500 targets across Iran, including air defense systems, missile launchers, and command-and-control facilities. Strikes were reported in at least 14 Iranian cities, including Tehran, Isfahan, Qom, Karaj, and Kermanshah. An Iranian Red Crescent spokesperson reported that 24 of Iran's 31 provinces were affected, with at least 201 people killed, including Ali Khamenei, and 747 injured as of that evening. Iran retaliated by launching ballistic missiles and drones at Israel and at US military bases in five Gulf states—Qatar,

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps also announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to shipping. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres condemned both the US-Israeli strikes and Iran's retaliation, stating they "undermine international peace and security," and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities.



On April 3, 2026, it was reported in Axios that the US expelled Iran's deputy ambassador to the UN, in December 2025. The issue remained silenced as it concerned national security. The report said that Deputy Ambassador Saadat Aghajani was asked to leave the USA under "section 13 procedures", rather than declaring him persona non grata. However, on April 7, Katie Miller said that the US was planning to revoke up to 4,000 visas of people with connections to the Iranian government.

Following Donald Trump's March 2026 assertion that it was not "appropriate" for Iran to participate in the 2026 World Cup due to safety concerns amid military conflict, the Iran national team issued a statement arguing that no one could exclude them and that the United States should instead be removed as host for failing to ensure the safety of participating teams.



In April 2026, U.S. special envoy Paolo Zampolli proposed that Italy replace Iran at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, prompting swift rejection from Italian officials who called the idea "not appropriate" and "shameful." Italian Sports Minister Andrea Abodi stated that qualification "must be earned on the pitch," while FIFA president Gianni Infantino reiterated that Iran would participate as scheduled.

On April 8, 2026, the United States and Iran agreed to a provisional two-week ceasefire ahead of planned negotiations in Pakistan. As part of the agreement, Tehran stated it would reopen the Strait of Hormuz to maritime traffic. Following the announcement of the conditional ceasefire, global oil prices experienced a sharp decline. An Iranian-flagged container ship MV Touska was intercepted en route from Malaysia to Iran. According to Iranian sources and state media, the vessel was operating near the Gulf of Oman when it was targeted by United States naval forces as part of what they described as enforcement of a maritime blockade. Iranian reports stated that the ship was struck by the USS Spruance, which allegedly disabled its propulsion by firing on the engine room, after which U.S. Marines boarded and took control of the vessel. Iranian officials and media characterized the incident as an attack on a civilian commercial vessel and a violation of an existing ceasefire agreement.

According to statements from U.S. officials, the operation was conducted after warnings were issued to the vessel, which was alleged to be violating sanctions and attempting to breach a naval blockade. The U.S. administration stated that the ship was declared subject to sanctions and that its seizure was part of enforcement actions in the region. Iranian authorities further claimed that the incident triggered retaliatory actions in the region and cited it as evidence of a breakdown of the ceasefire arrangements.

What is to become of the US-Iran Crisis the world is waiting to see...

NIGERIA SET TO HOST AIRBUS AVIATION AND HELICOPTER HUB DELIVERY TO FOSTER BETTER SECURITY FOR THE COUNTRY



Nigeria is set to deepen its aviation and security capabilities as the government advances plans to host a maintenance and hangar hub for Airbus, while also fast-tracking the delivery of three Apache attack helicopters previously ordered from Boeing as part of broader counterterrorism efforts.

In a recent development, Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu welcomed a proposal from global aircraft manufacturer Airbus to establish aircraft maintenance and hangar facilities in the country.

According to a statement issued by the presidential spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga, the agreement followed a meeting on the sidelines of the Africa CEO Forum in Kigali, Rwanda, between the President and Airbus' Head of Regional Business Growth for Africa and the Middle East, Thierry Cloutet.

During the discussion, President Bola Tinubu explained that Nigeria is in a dire security situation and urgently requires modern helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to combat insecurity in various parts of the country. He followed up by requesting the accelerated delivery of three Apache helicopters previously ordered as part of the administration's counterterrorism initiatives.

The President emphasized that securing sufficient attack helicopters to confront and overwhelm vicious terrorists remains a top priority for his administration. The meeting also involved discussions on several key initiatives to improve Nigeria's domestic aviation sector.

Notably, Nigeria is looking to acquire the Airbus C-295, a highly valued military asset. The platform is a sophisticated, twin-turboprop tactical military transport aircraft designed for specialized military operations, tactical airlift, and maritime patrol.

Additionally, the President highlighted the need to create more profitable financing models, such as sale-and-lease-back structures, to grant domestic airlines better access to aircraft. Plans to explore establishing a dedicated aviation leasing company in Nigeria are also underway, a move the President believes will unlock vital new economic opportunities for the country.

Cloutet commended President Tinubu's economic reforms and proposed a "360-degree engagement" model that moves beyond simple transactional partnerships to involve a multi-sectoral collaboration.

He reaffirmed that Airbus remains deeply committed to supporting Nigeria's long-term aerospace and aviation goals.



AIRBUS

AFRICAN BILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST, ALIKO DANGOTE REVEALS HIS PLANS FOR A 20,000MW POWER PROJECT

Aliko Dangote has revealed plans for a 20,000MW power project, signaling a major expansion of his industrial footprint beyond oil refining, cement, and fertilizer.

The 20,000 megawatts Power Project is nearly double Nigeria's current installed capacity of roughly 13,000 MW. Dangote has stated that his objective is to support Africa's Industrialization by providing stable energy and to complement the Dangote Group's existing massive investments in refining, fertilizers, and mining.

Although the goal was announced, specific financing details and timelines for the 20,000MW power project have not yet been disclosed.

Aliko Dangote's ambitious plans to expand his industrial conglomerate into the power sector, with a target of generating 20,000 megawatts (MW) is to combat energy shortages across Africa. This major expansion, revealed in early May 2026, aims to address the chronic power deficits that hinder industrial growth and economic prosperity in Nigeria and the wider continent.

This signals a major expansion of his industrial footprint beyond oil refining, cement, and fertilizer.

He disclosed this in an interview with Makhtar Diop, Managing Director of the International Finance Corporation.

"We are now going into power—20,000 megawatts," he said, adding that Africa's most pressing needs remain energy, fertilizers, and industrial inputs.

"And the needs of Africa are petroleum products, fertilizers," Dangote said. "Today, in about two and a half years, we will be the largest fertilizer company in the world. We are putting up 12 million tons of urea. We are opening up mines of potash and phosphate in Congo and Brazil. We are building the biggest deep-sea port with an 18-meter draft. We are doing LNG."

He added that the expansion is being driven by stronger cash flows and increased financial flexibility. *"We are now actually free of assets, and we can actually raise more money. Our cash flow now is very, very strong,"* he said.



Dangote did not provide details on financing or timelines for the power project, but a 20,000MW addition would significantly reshape Nigeria's struggling electricity sector. The country currently has an installed generation capacity of about 13,000MW, much of which is not consistently available due to infrastructure challenges.



REAL ESTATE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S RICHEST CITY FACING DIRE TIMES

The City of Johannesburg's worsening financial position is posing a major risk to property sentiment and values in the city, which is already seeing an outflow of millionaires due to governance concerns.

South Africa's Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana has noted that the city is technically bankrupt, with the minister threatening to withdraw billions of Rands in funding if it does not scrap an unaffordable wage bill. Godongwana revealed that the City of Johannesburg currently owes creditors R25.2 billion, while only having R3.9 billion in cash in the bank.

"This is a market of severe financial distress, indicating that the city does not have the liquidity required to pay its creditors," Godongwana said in a letter to Mayor Dada Morero.

Godongwana met with the Executive Mayor, Dada Morero, to discuss the serious concerns raised by the National Treasury. *"The meeting on Friday, 8 May, between Minister Godongwana and Mayor Morero, and their respective teams of officials and technical experts, was robust and productive."*

"The engagements are ongoing and are being treated with the urgency that they merit," the Treasury said.

Speaking in an interview with The Money Show, Berry Everitt, CEO of Chas Everitt International Property Group, said the danger of the National Treasury's warning to the city is a loss of confidence in the property market. *"Property markets are so sensitive to perceptions of stability, competent governance, and reliable service delivery."*

He said the concerns around Johannesburg's finances come at a particularly sensitive time for the city, which had recently started showing signs of recovery after years of stagnant property growth.

Everitt also noted that Johannesburg property prices had

underperformed for roughly a decade, while the Western Cape experienced significantly stronger growth driven by semigration trends.

"There's been a huge difference in property growth in the Western Cape and Johannesburg over the last couple of years, which is largely due to semigration," he said.

"And the most important reasons behind that semigration are the perception of the good governance of Cape Town versus poor governance in Jo'burg."

However, while Johannesburg leads, Cape Town is rapidly closing the gap and is projected to potentially overtake it by 2030 due to continued wealth migration and lifestyle preferences.

According to Everitt, Johannesburg had only recently begun regaining momentum, with more people returning from the Cape and overseas in search of work and business opportunities. *"In the past year, Johannesburg has been on the rise again, and we've been really excited about that,"* he said.

However, he warned that uncertainty around the city's financial future could quickly reverse those gains. *"We're concerned that investors and homeowners start to feel uncertain again about Johannesburg's financial future,"* said Everitt. *"They may delay buying decisions, postpone developments, or redirect investment elsewhere."*

He added that the commercial property sector could also come under pressure if businesses lose confidence in the city's governance and infrastructure. *"Businesses could be more cautious about expanding operations or signing long-term leases if they fear worsening infrastructure problems or instability,"* he said.

It is posited that the prolonged uncertainty would continue damaging sentiment and could eventually weigh on property values. And the longer this uncertainty continues, the more the emotional writhing happens and the greater the potential impact on property values and investment sentiment.

ADJAYE ASSOCIATES: A GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE ROOTED IN AFRICA

Adjaye Associates





AFRICAN HISTORY: THE LEGEND OF YASUKE – THE FIRST REAL AFRICAN SAMURAI

Yasuke was a 16th-century African man who became the first recorded foreign-born samurai in Japanese history. He served the powerful feudal lord Oda Nobunaga between 1581 and 1582 during the Sengoku period.

Oda Nobunaga was a powerful warlord striving to unify Japan as it emerged from the chaos of the Sengoku period. This era, also known as the *"Age of Warring States,"* was among the most turbulent in Japanese history, with constant military conflict as warlords battled for control over fractured territories. During this time, Japan also experienced its first major encounters with foreign cultures, as Portuguese and Spanish traders and missionaries began arriving in the 1540s.

Yasuke arrived in Japan in 1579 with Jesuit missionaries and became a trusted retainer and sword-bearer for the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga in 1581. Yasuke arrived in Kyoto where he found himself at the feet of the Feudal Lord Oda Nobunaga, who praised his height and build.

It had been the first time he had seen an African.

Upon their meeting, Nobunaga famously scrutinized Yasuke's skin, initially believing it to be painted black. Convinced this was the case, Nobunaga ordered him to bathe.

Despite this unusual introduction, Yasuke quickly impressed Nobunaga, having already picked up some Japanese. Nobunaga soon transferred him from Jesuit service into his own, honoring him with a house, money, servants, and even the new name, Yasuke. According to Jesuit chronicler Luís Fróis, many assumed Nobunaga would continue to lavish honors on Yasuke and elevate him to a lord.

Nobunaga quickly enlisted him into his ranks. They soon became close, treating him almost like family. Nobunaga described Yasuke as a man who had the might of 10 men, and was among the few people permitted to dine with the lord — a high honor. He fought in a number of important battles and is said to even be present the night

Nobunaga took his own life, a deep sign of Yasuke's loyalty. Granted the status of a samurai, a house, and a stipend, Yasuke fought in the Honnō-ji Incident (1582) before vanishing from historical records. His remarkable journey took him from Africa to the higher ranks of Oda Nobunaga's forces, where he became one of Japan's most intriguing figures.

Samurai were the hereditary, elite warrior class of pre-modern Japan, serving as armed retainers to daimyo (feudal lords) and the shogun from the 10th century until their abolition in 1876. Known as "*those who serve*," they followed a strict ethical code, Bushido (the way of the warrior), which emphasized loyalty, mastery of martial arts (especially the katana sword), and honor, even unto death.

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But given the honors lavished on him and that Nobunaga presented him with a sword, it's probable that he may have been considered an honorary one. Samurai or not, Yasuke proved his loyalty, fighting alongside Nobunaga in his campaigns to consolidate power across Japan.

BUT WHO EXACTLY WAS YASUKE? AND WHAT CAN HISTORIANS PIECE TOGETHER ABOUT HIS LIFE?

While his exact birthplace is unknown, it is believed Yasuke came from Portuguese Mozambique, Ethiopia, or Nigeria or somewhere in Africa, arriving in Japan in 1579 with Jesuit missionary Alessandro Valignano. It is said, his arrival in Kyoto caused a sensation, as he was a man of "*charcoal*" skin and towering stature (roughly 6 feet 2 inches or 1.88m), standing well over the average Japanese height of that time. He adopted the name 'Yasuke' only after arriving in Japan with the Jesuit missionary Alessandro Valignano. Yasuke likely met Valignano in Africa or India in the late 1570s. Valignano, tasked with assessing Catholic missions in Asia, recruited him as a bodyguard for a journey through India, China, and Japan.

Yasuke's arrival in Kyoto caused a massive, chaotic spectacle due to his skin color, which Nobunaga and many others initially believed had been painted on — as in a tattoo or fancy skin painting.

Yasuke served as a trusted bodyguard and accompanied Nobunaga in battle, including fighting at the Honnō-ji, where Nobunaga was betrayed and killed. Impressed by his strength and presence, Nobunaga took him into service, gave him the name "*Yasuke*," and granted him the status of a warrior (samurai). He was allowed to bear arms, a privilege reserved for the warrior class. Yasuke served as a bodyguard, learned Japanese, and was known for his strength, described as having the power of 10 men. He was considered a trusted companion by Nobunaga.

Nobunaga was at a time forced to commit seppuku (suicide) by his general Akechi Mitsuhide in 1582, at this time Yasuke fought for Nobunaga's son, Oda Nobutada, before being captured.

After Nobunaga's death, Yasuke was sent back to the Jesuits, after which there are no further historical records of his life. Following his capture, Akechi ordered Yasuke to be returned to the Jesuit mission in Kyoto. No further verified records of his life exist after 1582. The fall of Nobunaga's empire in 1582 also marks the end of Yasuke's known history, when he was exiled.

Historians debate whether Yasuke was technically a samurai, a term that denoted more than just a warrior. Samurai were generally born into this class and underwent rigorous training from a young age, learning not only combat skills but also the cultural and philosophical tenets of the role.

Yasuke has still become a legendary figure, often described as a, "real-life Black samurai who served under Oda Nobunaga," a symbol of cultural exchange, and is the subject of several books and movie series. The Term "Samurai": While some modern scholars emphasize Yasuke's role as a samurai, some discussions, debate whether his role as a retainer or "weapon bearer" is fully equivalent to the top-tier samurai class.

Despite his brief 15-month stint in the spotlight, his existence is firmly confirmed through Jesuit letters and the Shinchō Kōki (The Chronicle of Lord Nobunaga).

Although Yasuke wasn't the first person of African descent to arrive in Japan. European traders and missionaries sometimes sailed with attendants and crew members who had come from Africa. Nonetheless, Yasuke quickly attracted attention wherever he went and became a kind of celebrity. People took to the streets in droves just to see him. In Sakai, the crush of the crowd was so great that it actually damaged buildings in the city.

Yasuke has however, so far been recorded in history as the only African and first non-Japanese samurai. His story began around 1579 in Edo Japan. Not much is known about his life before arriving in Japan. Some say he was from the country of Mozambique and came to Japan on a ship with an Italian missionary named Alessandro Valignano on an inspection tour. Other accounts say he was an escaped slave.

In 1582, one of Nobunaga's vassals, Akechi Mitsuhide, launched a rebellion and surrounded Nobunaga at a temple in Kyoto. Yasuke fought fiercely at his side, but the vastly larger enemy force soon overpowered them. Facing capture, Nobunaga enacted seppuku, a ritualized form of suicide. Yasuke was later captured, but Mitsuhide decided to spare his life because he wasn't Japanese.

What happened to Yasuke after his time with Nobunaga ended? Some historians suggest he may have stayed in Japan, with records hinting at the presence of a tall African man in Japan during the 1590s. But whether this man was Yasuke or not, still remains a mystery.



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AFRICAN'S RICH HISTORY: THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT NUBIA – 'THE ARCHERS', THE TRADE HUB AND BATTLE 'CODE-TALKERS'



Nubia was home to some of Africa's earliest kingdoms. Known for rich deposits of gold, Nubia was also the gateway through which luxury products like incense, ivory, and ebony traveled from their source in sub-Saharan Africa to the civilizations of Egypt and the Mediterranean.

Archers of exceptional skill provided the military strength for Nubian rulers. Kings of Nubia ultimately conquered and ruled Egypt for about a century. Monuments still stand—in modern Egypt and Sudan—at the sites where Nubian rulers built cities, temples, and royal pyramids.

Nubians are an indigenous African people from the Nile Valley (modern-day southern Egypt and northern Sudan), forming one of Africa's oldest civilizations, dating back to 5000 BCE. Historically renowned as skilled archers and traders, they

established powerful kingdoms—most notably Kerma and Kush—that often interacted with, competed with, and briefly ruled Egypt as the 25th Dynasty.

Nubians Lived In The Central Nile Valley

African people from what is now the Sahara began to move toward the Nile in Nubia by around 5000 BC. They brought with them the art of making pottery. Originally herdsman and hunters of large animals, they eventually became fishermen and farmers. Over time, new people moved into the region from the south, so that Nubia's population was often a diverse mix of African peoples. The Nile River was a lifeline, and still is to this day.

Many Nubians lived along the Nile which curved northward through the desert. Farmers grew grains, peas, lentils, dates, and possibly melons. But especially important were their herds of cattle, a measure of wealth and social status. In the deserts, Nubians mined carnelian and gold, as well as other mineral resources. Bartering cattle, gold, carnelian, ivory, animal skins, hardwood, incense, and dates, Nubians traded with the Egyptians, their neighbors to the north, for grain, vegetable oils, wine, beer, linen, and other manufactured goods.

Most information about ancient Nubia comes from archaeological excavation and from the study of monuments and rock art found there. But the art and writing of Nubians, and of peoples contemporary with them also give important evidence. Records of ancient Egypt tell much about the history of Nubia, documenting a long and complex relationship between the two lands. Monuments and texts in the Egyptian language left by the Nubian kings, who became pharaohs of Egypt's 25th Dynasty around 750 BC, also provide an extensive record. Nubians developed alphabetic writing systems around 200 BC during the Meroitic period. The Meroitic language is still not understood well enough to read more than words and phrases, but much documentation on Meroitic Nubia

can be found in the art and literature of Greece and Rome, whose empires touched on the borders of Nubia after 330 BC.

The History Of The Name 'Nubia'

Nubia is a name that came into use in the Roman period. The origin of the name Nubia is a little obscure as some have linked it to *'nwb'*, the ancient Egyptian word for gold. Others connect it with the term Noubades, the Greek name for people who moved into northern Nubia sometime in the 4th century AD.

The ancient Egyptian word for gold was *nebu* (or *nwb* in transliteration), often associated with the collar-shaped hieroglyph depicting a necklace with dangling beads. It was considered the *"flesh of the gods"* and represented immortality. The name of the region Nubia is derived from *nub* because it was a major source of the metal.



Nubia Was Known As Kush For 2000 Years.

For much of antiquity, the region south of the 1st cataract of the Nile was called Kush. The name is known from ancient Egyptian, classical, and biblical texts. Whether it reflects an indigenous term is not known. The Kushites were known to develop powerful kingdoms. The first was centered at Kerma (2000–1650 BC). The later kingdom had capitals at Napata (800–270 BC) and Meroe (270 BC–370 AD).

Key Aspects Of Nubian History:

- **Ancient Roots:** Nubia was a major civilization centre, with agricultural societies developing by 6000 BCE, earlier than or concurrently with Egyptian civilization.
- **Kingdom of Kerma (c. 2500–1500 BCE):** The first unified Nubian state, known for distinct, advanced pottery and mud-brick architecture.
- **The Kingdom of Kush (c. 1070 BCE–350 AD):** Centered at Napata and later Meroë, Kush was a dominant trade power rich in gold, ivory, and iron.
- **25th Dynasty (c. 750–653 BCE):** Nubian kings (including Piy and Taharqa) conquered Egypt, ruling both lands and reviving traditional Egyptian pyramid-building and religious practices.
- **Meroitic Period:** Nubians developed their own script (Meroitic) and, in their later history, were known for massive ironworking industries and unique *"Meroitic pyramids"*.
- **Christian and Islamic Eras:** After the collapse of Meroë (c. 350 AD), Christian kingdoms like Makuria flourished, before gradually transitioning to Islamic, Arabized societies from the 16th century onward.

Key Cultural and Historical Characteristics:

The *"Land of the Bow"*: Known as Ta-Seti, Egyptians valued Nubians as elite archers. Nubians were very often acknowledged with their relationship with Egypt, often intertwined, with periods of peaceful trade, Egyptian colonization, and Nubian dominance. Nubians continue to maintain a distinct culture, language, and heritage, though many were displaced in the 20th century due to the construction of dams.

Nubians are an ethnic group indigenous to the Nubia region, which stretches from southern Egypt to northern Sudan. They

originate from the early inhabitants of the central Nile valley, believed to be one of the earliest cradles of civilization. In the southern valley of Egypt, Nubians differ culturally and ethnically from Egyptians, although they intermarried with them and other ethnic groups, especially Arabs. They speak the Nilo-Saharan Nubian languages as their mother tongue, which are part of the Northern Eastern Sudanic languages, and Arabic as a second language.

Neolithic settlements have been found in the central Nubian region, dating back to 7000 BC, with Wadi Halfa believed to be the oldest settlement in the central Nile valley. Parts of Nubia, particularly Lower Nubia, were at times part of ancient Pharaonic Egypt and at other times a rival state representing parts of Meroë or the Kingdom of Kush. By the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (744 BC–656 BC), all of Egypt was united with Nubia, extending down to what is now Khartoum. However, in 656 BC, the native Twenty-sixth Dynasty regained control of Egypt. As warriors, the ancient Nubians were famous for their skill and precision with the bow and arrow. In the Middle Ages, following the collapse of the Kingdom of Kush to the Axumites, and the closure of the last Ancient Egyptian temple by Emperor Justinian I, the Nubians started gradually converting to Christianity and established three kingdoms: Nobatia in the north, Makuria in the center, and Alodia in the south. They then converted to Islam during the Islamization of the Sudan region.

Today, Nubians in Egypt primarily live in southern Egypt, especially in Kom Ombo and Nasr al-Nuba - North of Aswan, and large cities such as Cairo, while Sudanese Nubians live in northern Sudan, particularly in the region between the city of Wadi Halfa on the Egypt-Sudan border and al Dabbah. Some Nubians were forcibly moved to Khashm el Girba and New Halfa upon the construction of the High Dam in Egypt which flooded their ancestral lands, displacing more than 100,000 Nubians. Additionally, a group known as the Midob live in northern Darfur,

a group named Birgid in Central Darfur and several groups known as the Hill Nubians who live in Northern Kordofan in Haraza and a few villages in the northern Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan state.

The main Nile Nubian groups from north to south are the Kenzi (Kenzi/Mattokki-speaking), Faddicca (Nobiin-speaking), Halfawi (Nobiin-speaking), Sukkot (Nobiin-speaking), Mahas (Nobiin-speaking), and Danagla (Andaandi-speaking).

Nubian Etymology

Throughout history various parts of Nubia were known by different names, including Ancient Egyptian: *nḫstj* *"Land of the Bow"*, *"Lower Nubia"*, and Greek Aethiopia. The origin of the names Nubia and Nubian is contested. Based on cultural traits, some scholars believe Nubia is derived from the Ancient Egyptian: *nbw* *"gold"*, although there is no such usage of the term as an ethnonym found in known Egyptian texts; the Egyptians referred to people from this area as the *'nḫsj.w'*. The Roman Empire however, used the term *"Nubia"* to describe the area of Upper Egypt and northern Sudan.

The prehistory of Nubia dates to the Paleolithic around 300,000 years ago. By about 6000 BC, peoples in the region had developed an agricultural economy. In their history, they adopted the Egyptian hieroglyphic system around 700 BC. Ancient history in Nubia is categorized according to the following periods: Group cultures (3700–2800 BC), (2300–1600 BC), Kerma culture (2500–1500 BC), Nubian contemporaries of the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BC), the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (1000–653 BC), Napata (1000–275 BC), Meroë (275 BC–300/350 AD), Makuria (340–1317 AD), Nobatia (350–650 AD), Alodia (600s–1504 AD), and Dotawo (1180s–1500 AD).

In the view of Egyptian scholar and editor of UNESCO General History of Africa Volume II (1981), Gamal Mokhtar, Upper Egypt and Nubia held *"similar ethnic composition"* with comparable material culture. Mokhtar described a notable difference

with Upper Egyptians having adopted a system of writing earlier due to the exigencies of the Nile Valley whilst their Nubian counterparts were more reticent due to their higher reliance on mobile, stock-raising as an expressed feature of their economy.

Archaeological evidence has attested that population settlements occurred in Nubia as early as the Late Pleistocene era and from the 5th millennium BC onwards, whereas there is "no or scanty evidence" of human presence in the Egyptian Nile Valley during these periods, which may be due to problems in site preservation.

An Archaeologist, Bruce Williams has advanced the view that Nubian elites participated with the early Egyptian rulers in the development of the pharaonic civilization. Williams also clarified in 1987 that his discovery of the Qustul incense burner proposed no claim of a Nubian origin or genesis for the pharaonic monarchy but that excavations had shown Nubian linkages and contributions. He maintained that detailed, archaeological evidence had found cemeteries of tombs situated in Qustul, Nubia which were described to be vastly wealthier and greater in size than the Abydos tombs of the first dynastic rulers of Egypt.

Several scholars have argued that the African origins of the Egyptian civilization derived from pastoral communities which emerged in both the Egyptian and Sudanese regions of the Nile Valley in the fifth millennium BCE. Pair of guardian statuettes (statues), depicting Middle Kingdom pharaohs, presumably Senusret I or Amenemhat II, with the white crown of Upper Egypt (left), the other with the red crown of Lower Egypt. The 12th dynasty had origins in Ta-Seti, Upper Egypt/Lower Nubia.

Various biological anthropological studies have shown close, biological affinities between the pre-dynastic southern, Egyptian and the early Nubian populations.

In 1996, a historian Frank Yurco remarked that depictions of pharaonic iconography such as the royal crowns, Horus falcons and victory scenes were concentrated in the Upper Egyptian Naqada culture and A-Group Lower Nubia. He further elaborated that *"Egyptian writing arose in Naqadan Upper Egypt and A-Group Lower Nubia, and not in the Delta cultures, where the direct Western Asian contact*



was made, [which] further vitiates the Mesopotamian-influence argument".

And in 2023, another historian Christopher Ehret reported that the existing archaeological, linguistic, biological anthropological and genetic evidence had determined the founding populations of Ancient Egyptian areas such as Naqada and El-Badari to be the descendants of longtime inhabitants in Northeastern Africa which included Egypt, Nubia and the northern Horn of Africa.

The linguistic affinities of early Nubian cultures are uncertain. Some research has suggested that the early inhabitants of the Nubia region, during the C-Group and Kerma cultures, were speakers of languages belonging to the Berber and Cushitic branches, respectively, of the Afro-asiatic family. More recent research instead suggests that the people of the Kerma culture spoke Nilo-Saharan languages of the Eastern Sudanic branch and that the peoples of the C-Group culture to their north spoke Cushitic languages. They were succeeded by the first Nubian language speakers, whose tongues belonged to another branch of Eastern Sudanic languages within the



Nilo-Saharan phylum. A 4th-century AD victory stele commemorative of Axumite king Ezana contains inscriptions describing two distinct population groups dwelling in ancient Nubia: a *"red"* population and a *"black"* population. Although Egypt and Nubia have a shared pre-dynastic and pharaonic history, the two histories diverge with the fall of Ancient Egypt and the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. At this point, the area of land between the 1st and the 6th cataract of the Nile became known as Nubia.

Ramesses II (An ancient King of Egypt) in his war chariot charging into battle against the Nubians. New Kingdom reliefs as seen in Rameses II temple, Beit el-Wali, represented Nubians with dark reddish brown and jet black skin tones.

The Nubian and Egyptian Conquests

Egypt is recorded to have been conquered first by the Persians and named the Satrapy (Province) of Mudriya, and two centuries later by the Greeks and then the Romans. During the latter period, however, the Kushites formed the kingdom of Meroë, which was ruled by a series of 'Kandakes' or Queens. The Kandaka of Meroë was able to intimidate Alexander the Great into retreat with a great army of elephants, while historical documents suggest that the Nubians defeated the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar, resulting in a favorable peace treaty for Meroë. The kingdom of Meroë also defeated the Persians, and later Christian Nubia defeated the invading Arab armies on three different occasions resulting in the 600 year peace treaty of Baqt, the

longest lasting treaty in history. The fall of the kingdom of Christian Nubia occurred in the early 1500s resulting in Islamization and reunification with Egypt under the Ottoman Empire, the Muhammad Ali dynasty, and British colonial rule. After the 1956 independence of Sudan from Egypt, Nubia and the Nubian people became divided between Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan.

Modern Nubians speak Nubian languages, Eastern Sudanic



languages that are part of the Nilo-Saharan family. The Old Nubian language is attested from the 8th century AD, and may be the oldest well-recorded language of Africa outside of the Afro-asiatic family, depending on the classification of Meroitic and the language of the Garamantes.

Nubia consisted of four regions with varied agriculture and landscapes. The Nile River and its valley were found in the north and central parts of Nubia, allowing farming using irrigation. The western Sudan had a mixture of peasant agriculture and nomadism. Eastern Sudan had primarily nomadism, with a few areas of irrigation and agriculture. Finally, there was the fertile pastoral region of the south, where Nubia's larger agricultural communities were located.

Nubia was dominated by kings from clans that controlled the gold mines. Trade in exotic goods from other parts of Africa (ivory, animal skins) passed to Egypt through Nubia.

Modern Nubians speak Nubian languages. However, they belong to the Eastern Sudanic branch of the Nilo-Saharan phylum. But there is some uncertainty regarding the classification of the languages spoken in Nubia in antiquity. There is some evidence that Cushitic languages were spoken in parts of Lower (northern) Nubia, an ancient region which straddles present-day Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan, and that Eastern Sudanic languages were spoken in Upper and Central Nubia, before the spread of Eastern Sudanic languages even further north into Lower Nubia.

Peter Behrens (1981) and Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst (2000) – researchers and historians suggest that the ancient peoples of the C-Group and Kerma civilizations spoke Afro-asiatic languages of the Berber and Cushitic branches, respectively. They propose that the Nilo-Saharan Nobiin language today contains a number of key pastoralism related loanwords that are of Berber or proto-Highland East Cushitic origin, including the terms for sheep/goatskin, hen/cock, livestock enclosure, butter and milk. This in turn, is interpreted to suggest that the C-Group and Kerma populations, who inhabited the Nile Valley immediately before the arrival of the first Nubian speakers, spoke Afro-asiatic languages.

Claude Rilly (2010, 2016) and Julien Cooper (2017) – Researchers and historians, on the other hand, suggest that the Kerma peoples (of Upper Nubia) spoke Nilo-Saharan languages of the Eastern Sudanic branch, possibly ancestral to the later Meroitic language, which Rilly also suggests was Nilo-Saharan. Rilly also considers evidence of significant early Afro-Asiatic influence, especially Berber, on Nobiin to be weak (and where present, more likely due to borrowed loanwords than substrata), and considers evidence of substratal influence on Nobiin from an earlier now extinct Eastern Sudanic language to be stronger. Julien Cooper (2017) nonetheless, suggests that Nilo-Saharan languages of the

Eastern Sudan branch were spoken by the people of Kerma, those further south along the Nile, to the west, and those of Saï (an island to the north of Kerma), but that Afro-Asiatic (most likely Cushitic) languages were spoken by other peoples in Lower Nubia (such as the Medjay and the C-Group culture) living in Nubian regions north of Saï toward Egypt and those southeast of the Nile in Punt in the Eastern desert. Based partly on an analysis of the phonology of place names and personal names from the relevant regions preserved in ancient texts, he argues that the terms from "*Kush*" and "*Irem*" (ancient names for Kerma and the region south of it respectively) in Egyptian texts display traits typical of Eastern Sudanic languages, while those from further north (in Lower Nubia) and east are more typical of the Afro-Asiatic family, noting: "*The Irem-list also provides a similar inventory to Kush, placing this firmly in an Eastern Sudanic zone.*"



These Irem/Kush-lists are distinctive from the Wawat-, Medjay-, Punt-, and Wetenet-lists, which provide sounds typical to Afroasiatic languages."

It is also uncertain to which language family the ancient Meroitic language is related. Kirsty Rowan suggests that Meroitic, like the Egyptian language, belongs to the Afroasiatic family. She bases this on its sound inventory and phonotactics, which, she argues, are similar to those of the Afroasiatic languages and dissimilar from those of the Nilo-Saharan

languages. Claude Rilly proposes, based on its syntax, morphology, and known vocabulary, that Meroitic, like the Nobiin language, belongs to the Eastern Sudanic branch of the Nilo-Saharan family.

The Kingdom of Kush persisted as a major regional power until the 4th Century AD, when it weakened and disintegrated amid worsening climatic conditions, internal rebellions, and foreign invasions— notably by the Noba people, who introduced the Nubian languages and gave their name to Nubia itself. While the Kushites were occupied by war with the Noba and the Blemmyes, the Aksumites took the opportunity to capture Meroë and loot its gold. Negus Ezana then took on the title of "*King of Ethiopia*," a practice which would last into the modern period and was recorded in inscriptions found in both Axum and Meroe. Although the Aksumite presence was likely short-lived, it prompted the dissolution of the Kushite kingdom into the three polities of Nobatia, Makuria and Alodia. The Kingdom of Alodia subsequently gained control of the southern territory of the former Meroitic Empire, including parts of Eritrea. The Axumite Empire of Ethiopia engaged in a series of invasions that culminated in the capture of the Nubian capital of Meroë in the middle of the 4th century AD, signaling the end of independent Nubian Pagan kingdoms. The Axumites then sent missionaries to Nubia to establish similar Syrian-based Christianity like in Ethiopia, but were competing with Egyptian-based Christianity, who eventually established the authority of the Coptic Church in the area, and founded new Nubian Christian kingdoms, such as Nobatia, Alodia, and Makuria. Tribal nomads like the Beja, Afar, and Saho managed to remain autonomous due to their decentralized nomadic nature. These tribal peoples would sporadically inflict attacks and raids on Axumite communities. The Beja nomads eventually Hellenized and integrated into the Nubian Greek society that had already been present in Lower Nubia for three centuries.

The descendants of the ancient Nubians still inhabit the general area of what was ancient Nubia. They currently live in what is called Old Nubia, mainly located in modern Egypt and Sudan. Nubians have been resettled in large numbers (an estimated 50,000 people) away from Wadi Halfa North Sudan in to Khashm el Girba – Sudan and some moved to Southern Egypt since the 1960s, when the Aswan High Dam was built on the Nile, flooding ancestral lands. Most Nubians nowadays work in Egyptian and Sudanese cities. Whereas Arabic was once only learned by Nubian men who travelled for work, it is increasingly being learned by Nubian women who have access to school, radio and television. Nubian women are working outside the home in increasing numbers.

Nubians – The Battle 'Code Talkers'

During the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Egypt employed Nubian people as Code talkers.

A code talker was a person employed by the military during wartime to use a little-known language as a means of secret communication.

Nubians have developed a common identity, which has been celebrated in poetry, novels, music, and storytelling. Nubians in modern Sudan include the Halfawis from Wadi Halfa to the second cataract, the Mahas from the second cataract to the third cataract, and the Danagla from Dongola to Al Dabbah. These Nubians write using their own script and maintain ancient traditions such as Sebu, a birth ceremony. Scarification was once practiced by Nubian tribes; Mahas men and women had three scars on each cheek, while the Danagla would have these scars on their temples. However, younger generations have abandoned this custom.

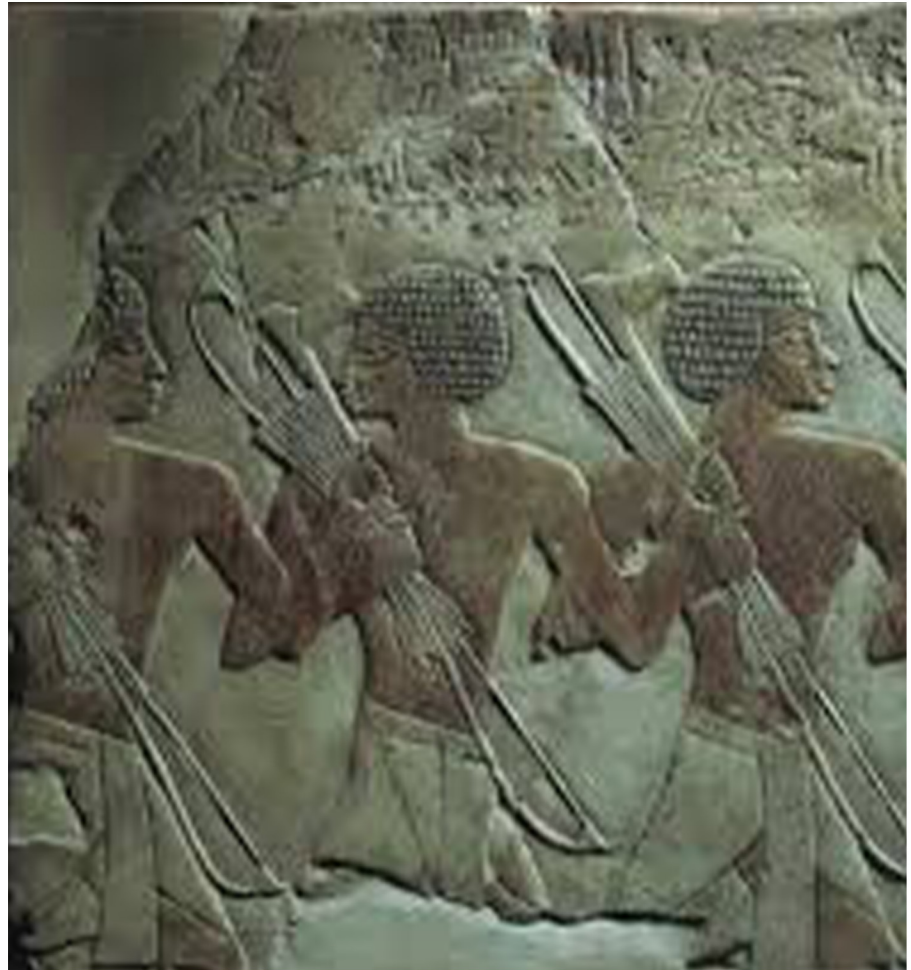
Nubia's ancient cultural development was influenced by its geography. It is sometimes divided into Upper Nubia and Lower Nubia. Upper Nubia was where the ancient Kingdom of Napata (the Kush) was located.

Lower Nubia has been called "*the corridor to Africa*", where there was contact and cultural exchange between Nubians, Egyptians, Greeks, Assyrians, Romans, and Arabs. Lower Nubia was also where the Kingdom of Meroe flourished. The languages spoken by modern Nubians are based on ancient Sudanic dialects. From north to south, they are: Kenuz, Fadicha (Matoki), Sukkot, Mahas, Danagla. Kerma, Napata, and Meroe were Nubia's largest population centres. The rich agricultural lands of Nubia supported these cities. Ancient Egyptian rulers sought control of Nubia's wealth, including gold, and the important trade routes within its territories. Nubia's trade links with Egypt led to Egypt's domination over Nubia during the New Kingdom period. The emergence of the Kingdom of Meroe in the 8th century BC led to Egypt being under the control of Nubian rulers for a century, although they preserved many Egyptian cultural traditions. Nubian kings were considered pious scholars and patrons of the arts, copying ancient Egyptian texts and even restoring some Egyptian cultural practices. After this, Egypt's influence declined greatly. Meroe became the centre of power for Nubia and cultural links with other parts of Africa gained greater influence.

Nubia And Egypt

Nubia and Ancient Egypt had periods of both peace and war. It is believed, based on rock art, that Nubian rulers and early Egyptian pharaohs used similar royal symbols. There was often peaceful cultural exchange and cooperation, and marriages





Egyptians called the Nubian region *“Ta-Seti,”* which means *“The Land of the Bow,”* a reference to Nubian archery skills. Around 3500 BCE, the *“A-Group”* of Nubians arose, existing side-by-side with the Naqada of Upper Egypt. These two groups traded gold, copper tools, faience, stone vessels, pots, and more. Egyptian unification in 3300 BCE may have been helped along by Nubian culture, which was conquered by Upper Egypt.

Nubia was first mentioned by ancient Egyptian trading accounts in 2300 BCE. Nubia was a gateway to the riches of Africa, and goods like gold, incense, ebony, copper, ivory, and animals flowed through it. By the Sixth Dynasty, Nubia was fractured into a group of small kingdoms; the population (called *“C-Group”*) may have been made up of Saharan nomads.

During the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (c. 2040-1640 BCE), Egypt began expanding into Nubian territory in order to control trade routes, and to build a series of forts along the Nile.

The Egyptians called a certain region of northern modern-day Sudan, where ancient Nubians lived, *“Medjay.”* This name gradually began to reference people, not the region. Those who lived in this region worked in the Egyptian military as scouts, later as garrison troops, and finally as elite paramilitary police.

Some Egyptian pharaohs were of Nubian origin, especially during the Kushite Period, although they closely followed the usual Egyptian methods of governing. In fact, they were seen, and saw themselves, as culturally Egyptian. The two cultures were so close that some scholars see them as indistinguishable. Nubians appear to have been assimilated into Egyptian culture.

Stay tuned for the next edition of our magazine for the continuation of the African Rich History Series..and follow excerpts on our website www.theafricandigest.com

AFRICAN DESTINATIONS - KING'S PALACE MUSEUM (RWANDA)



The King's Palace Museum in Nyanza (Rwanda), also known as the King's Palace Museum and Ethnographic Museum, is a reconstructed traditional royal residence that was built to showcase the traditional architecture and lifestyle of the Rwandan monarchy. The original royal residence, which the museum is based on, dates back to the time when Rwanda had a monarchical system.

The museum was constructed as a replica of the traditional royal palace and was designed to preserve and showcase the cultural heritage of Rwanda, offering visitors a glimpse into the pre-colonial history and traditions of the country. The museum aims to provide insight into the life of the Rwandan monarchy before it was abolished in 1961.

The King's Palace Museum showcases the traditional royal residence of the Rwandan monarchy before the abolition. It features a reconstructed traditional royal residence with royal artifacts, traditional items, and exhibits that offer visitors a glimpse into the life and customs of the Rwandan monarchy. Overall, the King's Palace Museum is famous for its role in preserving and promoting Rwanda's cultural heritage,

offering visitors a chance to learn about the country's history and traditions, particularly those associated with the Rwandan monarchy.

The History

Nyanza, once the pulsating heart of Rwanda, was a stage where power was seized and battles were waged, according to the lore passed down through generations. The monarchy, originally nomadic in nature, drifted from one court to another until it found a permanent abode. Nyanza, with its rich history and strategic location, was the unanimous choice.

The capital of the kingdom once buzzed with as many as 2,000 inhabitants, their homes constructed using the same meticulous methods displayed in the museum today. Nestled behind the museum, one can find a herd of the majestic, long-horned Inyambo cattle, the descendants of the king's own herd. Their caretakers diligently preserve a unique tradition, singing to the cattle as they tend to them.

Belonging to the broader Ankole breed, these stately bovines played a significant role in royal ceremonies. Adorned with resplendent jewellery, they were

trained to heed their handler's songs and move in a ceremonial march, adding to the grandeur of the royal court.

Even though the monarchy dissolved with Rwanda's independence from colonial rule in 1962, the tradition of breeding and grooming Inyambo continues under the aegis of the Rwanda Agriculture Board. Enhancing the historical experience, a visit to the nearby Ethnographic Museum in Huye, home to one of Africa's most prestigious ethnographic collections, complements the King's Palace perfectly.

The royal family in Rwanda traditionally belonged to the Tutsi ethnic group. The Tutsi, along with the Hutu and Twa, are the three main ethnic groups in Rwanda. Historically, the Tutsi were associated with cattle herding and were often identified as the aristocratic or ruling class. The monarchy in Rwanda was a hereditary institution, and the rulers came from the Tutsi elite.

It's important to note that the classification of these ethnic groups was complex and not solely based on genetic or cultural factors. The categories of Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa had socio-economic and political dimensions, and individuals could move between these categories based on various factors, including social status, wealth, and political influence.

The traditional Rwandan monarchy was abolished in 1961 following a series of political changes and movements toward independence. After the abolition of the monarchy, Rwanda experienced periods of political turbulence, including the tragic events of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. Today, Rwanda is a republic, and discussions about ethnicity and identity are approached with caution as part of the country's efforts to promote unity and reconciliation.

For Visitors and Tourists

Admission fees can change, and it's advisable to check with local sources or the official website for the most up-to-date information on entrance fees to the King's Palace Museum in Rwanda.

What You Can Do?

► **Tour the Museum:** Visitors are typically allowed to explore the museum's exhibits, showcasing artifacts, traditional items, and cultural displays related to the Rwandan monarchy.

► **Learn About Rwandan History:** Take the opportunity to learn about the history of Rwanda, particularly the cultural and historical significance of the royal family and the traditions associated with the monarchy.



Participate in Guided Tours: Some museums offer guided tours to enhance the visitor experience. Participating in a guided tour can provide additional insights into the exhibits.

What You Can't Do?

► **Touch Artifacts:** In most museums, touching artifacts is not allowed. This is to preserve the items and prevent damage.

► **Disrupt Exhibits:** Visitors should refrain from disruptive behavior that could disturb other guests or damage exhibits.

► **Eat or Drink Inside Exhibits:** Food and drinks are usually not allowed inside exhibit areas to prevent spills and damage to artifacts.

► **Ignore Museum Rules:** Always follow any specific rules or guidelines provided by the museum staff. This may include restrictions on certain areas, specific behaviors, or photography policies.

AFRICAN DESTINATIONS - THE GIZA PLATEAU (EGYPT)

The pyramids of Giza and the Great Sphinx are among the most popular tourist destinations in the world, and indeed already were even in Roman times. Each of these spectacular structures served as the final resting place of a king of the 4th Dynasty (c.2613–2494 BC). The Great Pyramid of Giza was built for King Khufu (c.2589–2566 BC), and the other two for Khafre and Menkaure, his son and grandson. Khufu's pyramid is both the oldest and largest of the three, and the first building to exceed it in height would not be built for another 3,800 years!

The Giza Plateau, located on the outskirts of Cairo, Egypt, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to the 4,500-year-old Old Kingdom necropolis. Its major landmarks include the Great Pyramids (Khufu, Khafre, Menkaure) and the Great Sphinx, built around 2600–2500 B.C.E. to serve as divine tombs.

The Giza pyramid complex consists of the Great Pyramid (also known as the Pyramid of Cheops or Khufu and constructed c.2580 – c.2560 BC), the somewhat smaller Pyramid of Khafre (or Chephren) a few hundred metres to the south-west, and the relatively modest-sized Pyramid of Menkaure (or Mykerinos) a few hundred metres farther south-west. The Great Sphinx lies on the east side of the complex.

Current consensus among Egyptologists is that the head of the Great Sphinx is that of Khafre. Along with these major monuments are a number of smaller satellite edifices, known as "queens" pyramids, causeways pyramid temples, valley temples, harbours, three cemetery fields and a workers' town.

Key Features and Landmarks

► **The Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops):** The oldest and largest pyramid, originally 146.5 meters tall, it is the last surviving wonder of the ancient world.

► **The Pyramid of Khafre (Chephren):** Built by Khufu's son, it appears taller because it sits on higher ground and retains some of its original limestone casing at the apex.

► **The Pyramid of Menkaure (Mykerinus):** The smallest of the three main pyramids.

► **The Great Sphinx:** A colossal statue with a lion's body and a human head, believed to represent Pharaoh Khafre guarding his burial complex.

► **Surrounding Necropolis:** Includes smaller "queen" pyramids, mastaba tombs for nobles, workers' settlements, and mortuary temples.

Historical and Engineering Significance

The pyramids were built as massive tombs to protect the pharaohs' bodies and provide for their journey to become gods in the afterlife. They were built with



roughly 5.5 million tonnes of limestone and 8,000 tonnes of granite, transported to the site.

Visitor Information

Giza Plateau is located on the west bank of the Nile about 13 km from central Cairo.

Some fun activities you could engage in whilst you are there include: Exploring the plateau, entering the pyramids, visiting the Sphinx area, and camel or horse-drawn carriage rides. The site offers a direct window into one of the world's first great civilizations, featuring tombs that illustrate the everyday activities

beliefs of the ancient Egyptians.

Great Sphinx of Giza

The Great Sphinx of Giza is a limestone statue of a reclining sphinx, a mythical creature with the head of a human, and the body of a lion. Facing directly from west to east, it was carved out of a low lying spur of the Giza Plateau on the west bank of the Nile in Giza. The face of the Sphinx appears to represent the pharaoh Khafre. The Sphinx is the oldest known monumental sculpture in Egypt and one of the most recognizable statues in the world. Archaeological evidence suggests that it was created by ancient Egyptians of the Old Kingdom during the reign of Khafre (c. 2558–2532 BC).

The original shape of the Sphinx was cut from the bedrock, and has since been restored with layers of limestone blocks. It measures 73 metres (240 feet) long from paw to tail, 20 metres (66 feet) high from the base to the top of the head and 19 metres (62 feet) wide at its rear haunches. Its nose was broken off between the 3rd and 10th centuries AD. The Arab historian al-Maqrīzī, writing in the 15th century, attributes the loss of the nose to Muhammad Sa'im al-Dahr.

The Giza Plateau is accessed by two main roads. The road from the north leads to Khufu's pyramid; the other to near the Sphinx's front court, from the east. They cross the Nile River from the east bank and follow the causeway westward. Dominating the plateau and running in a southwest diagonal through the site are the three pyramids of the pharaohs Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure.

Although the three pyramids dominate the plateau, they are in fact surrounded by many other monuments. Every king's pyramid was just one element albeit the most important of a larger complex that included smaller, subsidiary, queens' pyramids; an additional one that acted as a second, symbolic, tomb for the king, called a satellite pyramid; mastaba tombs for nobility and other family members; burials of actual

and/or symbolic boats; and a pair of temples linked by a richly decorated causeway. One of these temples, called the valley temple, led into the pyramid complex, and was located on or near a body of water where boats could dock. The other, the funerary (or upper) temple, stood near the base of the pyramid. Priests maintained the mortuary cult of the deceased king in these temples, where his divine aspect was worshiped, and where rich and diverse offerings were presented to his soul so he could have a peaceful and luxurious afterlife.



AFRICAN DESTINATIONS – THE UNIVERSITY OF AL QARAOUYINE, MOROCCO

The first and oldest University in the World

Did you ever hear of the University of Al Quaraouiyyine in Morocco?

The University of Al Quaraouiyyine (Qarawiyyin), located in Fez (within the Medina of Fez), Morocco, is Guinness World Records as the oldest continuously operating degree-granting institution (University) in the world, founded in 859 AD by Fatima al-Fihri, a woman who used her inheritance to build a mosque and school for her community. Originally a mosque, it became a leading intellectual center for Islamic studies, law, and science, later integrating into Morocco's state university system in 1963.

It was founded as a mosque by Fatima al-Fihri in 857–859 and subsequently became one of the leading spiritual and educational centers of the Islamic Golden age.

It was incorporated into Morocco's modern state university system in 1963 and officially renamed "University of Al Quaraouiyyine" two years later. The mosque building itself is also a significant complex of historical Moroccan and Islamic architecture that features elements from many different periods of Moroccan history.

Although the University of Al Quaraouiyyine originally specialized in Islamic sciences (Maliki law, Quranic studies), Arabic grammar, and rhetoric. Historically, it also taught astronomy, mathematics, logic, and medicine. The University also houses a world-famous, ancient library containing over 30,000 manuscripts, including 9th-century Qurans.

In its prime, it was a focal point for exchanging knowledge between the Islamic world and Europe.

The University Today

Incorporated into the modern Moroccan university system in 1963, it still maintains a focus on traditional Islamic sciences and language. While focusing on theology and jurisprudence, it also offers courses in various Islamic sciences and related disciplines. It is open to both men and women, continuing its role in promoting higher education.

The site is still a key tourist attraction due to its stunning, ancient architecture featuring intricate tile work and calligraphy.

Scholars consider al-Qarawiyyin to have been effectively run as a madrasa until after World War II. Many scholars distinguish this status from the status of "university", which they view as a distinctly European invention. They date al-Qarawiyyin's transformation from a madrasa into a university to its modern reorganization in 1963.

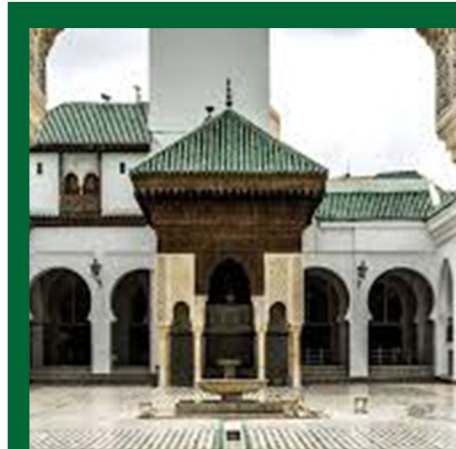
Education at the University of al-Qarawiyyin concentrates on the Islamic religious and legal sciences with a heavy emphasis on, and particular strengths in, Classical Arabic

grammar/linguistics and Maliki Sharia, though lessons on non-Islamic subjects are also offered to students. Teaching is still delivered in the traditional methods. The university is attended by students from all over Morocco and Muslim West Africa, with some also coming from further abroad. Women were first admitted to the institution in the 1940s after the women's movement pressured the French colonial government at the time.

The Arabic name of the university means "University of the People from Kairouan". Factors such as the provenance of Fatima al-Fihriya's family in Tunisia. The French colonization of Morocco have resulted in a number of different orthographies for the romanization of the university's name, including al-Qarawiyyin, a standard anglicization; Al Quaraouiyine, following French orthography; and Al-Karaouine, another rendering using French orthography.

Foundation Of The Mosque

In the 9th century, Fez was the capital of the Idrisid dynasty, the first Islamic state based in present-day Morocco. According to one of the major early sources on this period, the Rawd al-Qirtas by Ibn Abi Zar, al-Qarawiyyin (The University) was founded earlier as a mosque by Fatima al-Fihri, the daughter of a wealthy merchant named Mohammed al-Fihri. The al-Fihri family had migrated from Kairouan (hence the name of the mosque), Tunisia to Fez in the early 9th century, joining a community of other migrants from Kairouan who had settled in a western district of the city. Fatima and her sister Mariam, both of whom were well educated, inherited a large amount of money from their father. Fatima vowed to spend her entire inheritance to build a mosque suitable for her community. Similarly, her sister Mariam is also reputed to have founded al-Andalusiyyin Mosque the same year.



AFRICAN DESTINATIONS - THABA-BOSIU NATIONAL MONUMENT (LESOTHO)

Thaba-Bosiu National Monument is a plateau situated in the Phuthiatsana Valley, about 23km south-east of Maseru, the capital city. It was the 19th-century sandstone plateau stronghold of King Moshoeshe I and the birthplace of the Basotho nation. It was named Thaba-Bosiu (mountain at night) during the occupation of Moshoeshe I, founder of the Basotho nation in 1824. It served as an impenetrable fortress, believed to glow at night, and remains a spiritual site containing the graves of the Royal Family.

It got its name because as one gets nearer the impressive and formidable it gets mainly for the enemies at night. It covers an area of about 3km (north-south) by 2km (east-west). It has steep vertical cliffs along the ridge and is accessible only along with foot passes. Several water springs on the plateau sustained the occupants and some have been named after the historical figures such as the one used by 'Mamohato the first wife to Moshoeshe I, and Makhabane, Moshoeshe's brother. There is a graveyard where Moshoeshe I and his family members were buried.

Historical Significance

Thaba-Bosiu National Monument signifies the Birthplace of a Nation. King Moshoeshe I established this fortress in 1824 as a refuge during intertribal wars (lifaqane), uniting various groups to form the Basotho nation. The mountain is known as "Mountain at Night" because it was believed to appear lower by day but taller and impossible to scale by night, allowing the Basotho to repel attackers,

including Zulu and Afrikaner forces. It highly perceived as an Impregnable Fortress.

Visitors are able to hike and climb to the top for scenic views and to see the graves and ruins. The climb is relatively easy, though it seems daunting at first.

Thaba Bosiu Cultural Village which is located at the foot of the mountain, offers guided tours, a museum, a restaurant, and a venue that showcases traditional Basotho architecture and history.

The Thaba-Bosiu National Monument Significance is often visited by the royal family on January 1st for reflection.

Cultural Significance

It is considered a sacred site and a pilgrimage destination, often



described as a "Mecca" for Basotho people to reconnect with their roots.

The plateau hosts remnants of Moshoeshoe's village. The walls of a two-roomed European house, several houses occupied by his relatives and villagers are still standing. There is testimony bearing interaction between Moshoeshoe and other nations with the inscriptions on a rock. There are rock paintings and other forms of archaeological materials/deposits.

Located 24km outside of the city of Maseru, Thaba Bosiu is a National Monument and Lesotho's foremost tourist destination holding great historical significance as the birthplace of the Basotho People.

For any tourist visiting Lesotho, the Thaba Bosiu Cultural Village is a "must-see" destination for a contemporary, yet uniquely Lesotho experience. All our chalets come standard with double or twin beds, Shower, Fridge, and Cable TV.

We invite you to come and enjoy a great experience.

“DISCOVERING AFRICA MORE”; AFRICA’S TRAVEL DESTINATIONS – VISIT ZUMA ROCK (NIGERIA)

"The rock with a human face"

Zuma Rock is a massive 725-meter (2,379 feet) high igneous intrusion monolith located in Niger State, Nigeria, famously known as the "Gateway to Abuja". Often called the "rock with a human face" due to natural weathering, it is a premier, 500-million-year-old tourist site featured on Nigeria's ₦100 (One Hundred naira) note.

Zuma Rock is a large rock composed of gabbro and granodiorite and of Precambrian

age, located in Madalla, a town in Niger State, Nigeria. It is situated in the west of Nigeria's capital, Abuja, along the main road from Abuja to Kaduna (North-West of Nigeria), off Madalla, and is sometimes referred to as the "Gateway to Abuja from Suleja". Zuma Rock rises approximately 725 metres (2,379 feet) above sea level. It was once thought to be within the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, however it is actually located at the upper end of Madalla, a rural settlement in Suleja Local Government Area of Niger State.

Zuma Rock depicted on the 100 naira note, was once used for a defensive retreat by the Gbagyi people against invading neighbouring tribes during intertribal wars.

The History

The rock was found in the 15th century by the Zuba people of Niger State, who called it zumwa, which could translate to "a place of guinea fowls". It had been known by that name earlier in the 15th century when the 'Kwararafa' (Kororofa) had started to spread all over the northern areas of Nigeria. The people of Zuba today were once part of the Kwararafa that are called or identified today as Koro. They are now part of the 'Jukun' that are in diaspora. The forefathers spread from the Kwararafa empire, travelled to the western direction through 'Lafia' (but Lafia was not there as at that time), then through Keffi area (but there was nothing like Keffi as at that time), then into the old Abuja area which was not in existence then too. But before they reached the Zuma Rock, their soothsayers told them that they were not to settle down permanently until they had reached one wonderful rock, far



ahead of them. They continued to move approaching the Zuma rock till they came to meet the Zuma rock in the middle of a thick forest. When they entered into the forest, they settled within a mile radius around it and founded settlements like Shinapa (where their leadership was), Chaci, Luki, Esa, Zumwa, Yeku, Huntu, Wagu of the upperland and Wagu of the lowerland.

'Fetish' Village

In the forest surrounding the rock, there existed a village inhabited by the Koro people, whose chief served as the priest of the rock's deity. This deity was associated with a small rock within the village where sacrifices were believed to occur. The inhabitants of this forest village were said to protect the rock, preventing 'outsiders' from reaching it.



There was a prevailing belief that no person had ever reached the rock's base due to superstitions and the fear of a curse. Additionally, it was believed that the village itself was hidden from sight. Historically, the Emir of Abuja sent annual sacrifices—a black ox, a black he-goat, and a black dog—to the guardians of the rock as offerings to the deity. These sacrifices were delivered by villagers from 'Chachi', who were permitted to interact with the guardians due to their shared tribal connections.

Zuma Rock dubbed "Zumwa" ("place of guinea fowls") was considered a sacred, powerful deity. The Rock served as a spiritual protector and defensive, hidden refuge for local communities against invaders.

Indigenous groups, including the Gbagyi, revere the rock as a guardian, offering sacrifices to it for protection.

A natural weathering phenomenon, a human-like face with eyes, nose, and mouth is visible on the rock's surface, which locals believe represents the deity controlling the community's affairs. Formed over 500 million years ago, the rock is composed of gabbro and granodiorite. Legend suggests the rock causes the surrounding area to fire up during the rainy season due to friction

Several centuries down the line, Zuma Rock still has multiple mysterious stories woven around it. Some natives have tales of unseen evil spirits dwelling in the belly of the rock. Others regard it as a den for ritualists, a hidden temple for initiation into the world of the occult and an abode for daredevil armed robbers who seek temporary refuge there whenever they conclude a successful operation and want to share their loot or when security agencies are on their trail.

Not far from the rock is an uncompleted white edifice known as the Zuma Rock Hotel. Some residents of the area believe that the hotel was a haunted zone, hence it was abandoned by its owners. In the course of exploring the area and trying to fix the jig-saw puzzles of the rock, residents living within the radius of the rock gave varying accounts. Some are of the opinion that the evil spirits had relocated, giving people a respite to now begin farming on the parcels of land near the rock. Yet some residents said the evil spirits were still living in the bowels of the rock and do exhibit strange powers especially during odd hours of the night.

The First Man to Climb Zuma Rock is Mainasara Kubashiyaki. His story goes way back to the time of the great King Odinaka of Sokoto.



Discover more of Africa in our upcoming Magazine.

AFRICAN TRAVEL DESTINATIONS – SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

– One Time Africa's foremost exporter of Sugar and Slave Trade Channel

Very little is known about the African Nation - São Tomé and Príncipe

São Tomé and Príncipe which was earlier uninhabited until discovered by Portuguese explorers João de Santarém and Pêro Escobar around 1470–1471, served as a vital, slave-driven sugar, coffee, and cocoa production hub in the Gulf of Guinea. The islands were established as a colony in the late 15th century and, after becoming a major slave trade center, transitioned to plantation economies 'roças' before achieving independence in 1975.

A Little History About São Tomé And Príncipe

The ancient history of São Tomé and Príncipe is unique because the islands were uninhabited until their discovery by Portuguese explorers in the late 15th century. Unlike many other African nations, there is no evidence of an indigenous population prior to European arrival.

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe were first reached by Portuguese navigators João de Santarém and Pêro Escobar between 1470 and 1472. São Tomé was named after Saint Thomas because it was discovered on his feast day, December 21, 1470 whilst Príncipe (was originally named Santo Antão / Saint Anthony), until it was renamed in 1502 to Ilha do Príncipe ("Prince's Island") in honor of the Prince of Portugal, who received the duties from the island's sugar crops.

One of the most distinct ethnic groups, the Angolares, is traditionally believed to be descended from Angolan survivors of a 1540 shipwreck. They fled into the island's



island's interior and maintained a semi-independent community for centuries, largely separate from the colonial administration.

By the mid-16th century, the islands became Africa's foremost exporter of sugar.

The harsh working conditions of the slaves who worked the sugarcane plantations led to frequent uprisings and slave revolts. Most notably, in 1595, a leader named Amador led a massive slave rebellion that briefly took control of the capital before being defeated. Sugar production eventually declined due to competition from Brazil and frequent social instability, leading the islands to serve primarily as a trans-shipment hub for the Atlantic slave trade until the 19th-century introduction of coffee and cocoa.

Rolas Island (Ilhéu das Rolas)

Rolas Island (Ilhéu das Rolas) is a tiny, tropical, and mostly pedestrian volcanic island located just south of São Tomé Island in São Tomé and Príncipe. Renowned for being directly crossed by the equator, it features a monument marking this spot, alongside pristine beaches and lush landscapes. Primarily accessible by a 20-minute boat ride from Porto

paradise experience.

Ilhéu das Rolas is an islet in the African island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe. It lies on the Equator, off the southern tip of São Tomé Island, separated by Canal das Rolas. Its maximum elevation is 96 metres (315 feet). It is part of the Caué District. Access to the island is only by ferry from Ponta Baleia on São Tomé Island. There is a lighthouse on the islet, built in 1929.

Situated in the Atlantic Ocean off the southern tip of São Tomé, separated by the Canal das Rolas. It is known for its volcanic, lush, and scenic landscape. The island is famously crossed by the Equator (latitude).

A monument on a hill offers a panoramic view, marking this unique geographical point.

To reach the island, visitors have to take a boat (often a 20-minute ride) from Porto Alegre on the main island.

Fun Activities To Enjoy:

Activities that visitors to the Rolas Island can enjoy include: visiting the Equator monument, enjoying snorkeling in clear waters, hiking scenic trails with local guides, and relaxing on secluded beaches.

The area is known for prominent sea turtle nesting.

The island was identified on early maps, such as a 1665 map by Johannes Vingboons. Geodesic surveys by Gago Coutinho in the early 20th century confirmed the exact location of the equator.

The Bay of Needles

The Bay of Needles (Baia das Agulhas) is a stunning, remote bay on the western side of Príncipe Island in São Tomé and Príncipe, known for its dramatic volcanic, needle-like rock formations. Located within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, it offers pristine beaches (like Caixão and Lapa), snorkeling, and, boat trips.

São Tomé and Príncipe are a haven for nature lovers, with lush



Situated in the Atlantic Ocean off the southern tip of São Tomé, separated by the Canal das Rolas. The Bay of Needles is known for its volcanic, lush, and scenic landscape. The island is famously crossed by the 'the Equator marker' Equator (Latitude). A monument on a hill offers a panoramic view, marking this unique geographical point.

To reach the island, visitors take a boat (often a 20-minute ride) from Porto Alegre on the main island.

Tourism and Activities:

Fun activities that visitors to the island can enjoy include: visiting the Equator monument, enjoying snorkeling in clear waters, hiking scenic trails with local guides, and relaxing on secluded beaches. The area is also known for sea turtle nesting.

The island was identified on early maps, such as a 1665 map by Johannes Vingboons. Geodesic surveys by Gago Coutinho in the early 20th century confirmed the exact location of the equator.

Pico Cão Grande

The Pico Cão Grande (Portuguese for "Great Dog Peak") is a landmark needle-shaped volcanic plug peak in São Tomé and Príncipe, in the Caué District of São Tomé Island in Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé. Its summit is 663 metres (2,175 feet) above sea level, and it rises about 370 metres (1,210 feet) over the surrounding terrain. The volcanic plug was formed by magma solidifying in the vent of an active volcano. The nearest village is Vila Clotilde, 3 kilometres to the east.

The volcanic plug is a relatively recent phenomenon, having formed as part of the Cameroon line of volcanoes roughly three and a half million years ago in the Pliocene. Its composition is mainly phonolite (also called clinkstone in vernacular English).

The moss growing on the rocks due to high moisture content, and the presence of snakes, make climbing here very difficult.



rainforests, unique wildlife, and rare bird species. The Unique Virgin Forests of Obô Natural Park is a must-visit, where scenic trails take you to breathtaking waterfalls, volcanic peaks, and incredible wildlife encounters.

Situated on the western coast of Príncipe, within the Parque Natural do Príncipe, the bay of needles is characterized by steep, lush, jungle-covered hills that drop into the sea, featuring towering volcanic plugs known locally as "The Father, The Son and The Grandson". It is primarily accessible by boat, with trips commonly arranged from the Príncipe Collection hotels.

The area is popular for boat tours, swimming, snorkeling, and exploring nearby secluded beaches like Banana Beach. The surrounding area is also rich in biodiversity, with opportunities to see marine life, including, at times, dolphins or turtle.

The first attempt to climb Pico Cão Grande was made in 1975 by a Portuguese team of climbers. However the first successful ascent was achieved in February 1991 by a Japanese team consisting of Yosuke Takahashi, Kenichi Moriyama, and Naotoshi Agata.

AFRICA'S TRAVEL DESTINATIONS - KAKUM NATIONAL PARK (GHANA)

Kakum National Park, established in 1992 in Ghana's Central Region near Cape Coast, is a 375 sq km tropical rainforest renowned for its 350-meter-long canopy walkway suspended 40 meters high. It is a premier biodiversity spot featuring endangered fauna like forest elephants, Diana monkeys, and over 200 bird species.

Key Features & Highlights

- ▶ **Canopy Walkway:** the Park's main attraction, consisting of seven bridges connecting treetops, offering a unique bird's-eye view of the forest.
- ▶ **Wildlife & Biodiversity:** Home to forest elephants, bongo antelopes, monkeys, and diverse birdlife.
- ▶ **Nature Trails:** Guided walks offer insights into medicinal plants, local trees, and their cultural significance.
- ▶ **Unique Management:** It is notable for being established by local people rather than state initiative.
- ▶ **Visitor Center:** It features a restaurant, lodge, picnic area, and a recently developed children's park

Kakum National Park, located in the coastal environs of the Central Region of Ghana, covers an area of 375 square kilometres (145 square miles).

Established in 1931 as a reserve, it was gazetted as a national park only in 1992 after an initial survey of avifauna was conducted. The area is covered with tropical forest. The uniqueness of this

park lies in the fact that it was established at the initiative of the local people and not by the State Department of wildlife who are responsible for wildlife preservation in Ghana. It is one of only 3 locations in Africa with a canopy walkway, which is 350 metres (1,150 feet) long and connects several tree tops which provides access to the forest.

Natural Wildlife Species

The most notable endangered species of fauna in the park are Diana monkey, giant bongo antelope, yellow-backed duiker and African elephant. It is also an Important Bird Area recognized by the Bird Life International with the bird area fully overlapping the park area. The bird inventory confirmed 266 species in the park, including eight species of global conservation concern. One of these species of concern is the white-breasted guinea fowl. Nine species of hornbill and the grey parrot have been recorded. And it also has more than 600 butterflies as well, and a new species was discovered in 1993. As of 2012, the densest population of forest elephants in Ghana is located in Kakum.

History

In 1931, the area drained by the headwater catchment of the Kakum River was declared a forest reserve and managed by the Forestry Division of Ghana. During this period, logging operations were prevalent, particularly of the mahogany tree species. The logging operations continued till 1989 when the management of the reserve was transferred to the Wildlife Department. The Kakum River originates within the park, and hence the park is named after the river. Its tributaries which flow through the park are Obuo, Kakum, Afia, Sukuma, Nemimi, Aboabo and Ajuesu. It is located 33 kilometres (21 miles) north of Cape Coast and Elmina near the small village of Abrafo in Ghana. It is easily accessible by taxis from the town center, and through organized tour buses. The park's welcome center contains a restaurant, lodge, picnic area, camping area,



and a wildlife education center. The park is surrounded by 33 villages and also agricultural lands where food crops and coco are grown.

A particular feature in the Kakum Park is the "Komfo Boateng's Shrine", a circular rock near Aboabo.

Kakum Canopy Walkway

The park has a long series of hanging bridges known as the Kakum Canopy Walkway at the forest canopy level to provide access to the forest, which is a unique feature in the entire African continent. At 40 metres (130 feet) height, the visitor can approach the limits and view plants and animals from a vantage point that would otherwise be inaccessible to people. The canopy walkway passes over 7 bridges and runs over a length of 330 metres (1,080 feet). Some of the tree canopies are more than 50 metres (160 feet) in height. Built with wire rope, aluminium ladders, wooden planks, it is secured by a series of netting for safety purposes. An additional viewing platform that will allow visitors to climb into the canopy without braving the canopy walkway is currently under construction. The Canopy Walkway was built by two Canadian engineers from Vancouver with the assistance of five (5) Ghanaians - the latter (staff of Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust- managers of the Kakum National Park Visitor Centre) have been maintaining the facility ever since. The original concept for establishing the canopy walkway at this location was the inspiration of Joseph Dudley, a conservation biologist recruited by Conservation International who coordinated the drafting of the Feasibility Study and Preliminary 5-year Management Plan for the development of Kakum National Park as an ecotourism destination under a project conducted for the United Nations Development Program (Dudley 1990).

The Park now boasts of a Tree House which sits about 20metres from the forest floor in the trees in the Secondary Forest. This facility which houses close to 25 people provides an adventurous opportunity for campers to especially at night experience forest life. Due to the thickness of the rainforest, a number of the fauna (genets, leopards, etc.) are active in the night searching for prey to feed on. The Tree House thus provides a close proximity to the wildlife of Kakum. A trained Tour Guide is always on hand to take campers on the night hikes as well as sharing Folklore of the Kakum Forest by a bonfire. It is an intriguing adventure.

THE MUSEUM OF THE BAMOUN KINGS (CAMEROON)

The Museum of the Bamoun Kings (Musée des Rois Bamoun) in Foumban, Cameroon, inaugurated in April 2024, is a landmark cultural institution showcasing over 600 years of history. It houses over 10,000 artifacts—including royal treasures and portraits—and features unique architecture shaped like a two-headed snake, a spider, and a gong, symbols of the Bamoun dynasty.

One of the most significant African museum openings of 2024 was the Musée des Rois Bamoun, or 'Museum of the Bamoun Kings', in Foumban, Cameroon.

Housing over 10,000 objects, it offers more than 600 years of history in its display of the treasures of the Bamoun kingdom, one of the oldest in sub-Saharan Africa. The museum's striking architecture is dominated by a two-headed snake at its entrance and a spider perched on top of it.



Who were the Bamoun kings?

The Bamoun (or Bamum) kingdom in western Cameroon was established in 1394 by the Tikar Prince Nshare Yèn. Settling in the region from neighbouring territory, he established the palace at Foumban. The monarchy has survived through 20 reigns.

Nshare Yèn's daughter became notable as the first female ruler of the kingdom. Her name means "skin of the sky", a reference to her light complexion at birth. King Mònjù (1461–1498) introduced an eight-day week, advancing the idea of chronological organisation. After a period of some stagnation, Mo'Nguh (1568–1590) reconstructed the palace, preserving royal heritage. Kuotu (1672–1757) suppressed internal uprisings and ruled for an unprecedented 85 years.

The 11th king, Mbuombuo Mandù (1757–1814), expanded the kingdom through military campaigns but this was followed by a period of internal strife and massacres under Gbètnkom (1814–1817). When he died, power was left in the hands of his son, who was still a child then.

A tour of the Museum of the Bamoun Kings is led by a mediator who accompanies visitors through almost a dozen key exhibition spaces, starting with the portrait gallery showing images of the 20 kings. This leads to vast murals, including one that illustrates the establishment of the kingdom. Artefacts include royal

headdresses, a statue and parts of an ancient pirogue (canoe) and tree.

This leads to exhibits from the 2nd to the 10th kings. Items on show include Bamoun cloth. The first fabric was created from beaten tree bark and dyed with indigo.

King Mbuombuo's space displays a large statue of the 11th king in traditional attire. The kingdom's coat of arms, featuring a mygale spider, a two-headed snake, and a double-gong bell, decorates the wall. In the centre of the room, a human skull and calabash are displayed. War trophy costumes, Tu'molah crest masks, royal pipes and weapons are also exhibited.

Highlights of the 12th and 13th kings' space include royal headdresses, umbrellas and handbags. One then arrives at a room with audiovisual projections that offer insights into the secret societies of Bamoun culture. There are then artefacts from these societies (the Nguri, Mut-Ngu, and Mbansié) including dance costumes and masks. Next, one encounters a showcase of Bamoun craftsmanship and artistry.





The space of the 15th, 16th and 17th kings includes a beaded royal stool, weapons, a human skull, royal bed, King Njoya's manuscripts, costumes, private chambers, Quranic artefacts, musical instruments, masks and portraits.

The space of the 18th, 19th and 20th kings features photographs, the 18th king's prayer room and private rooms, a Quran translated into Bamoun, a throne, ceremonial stones, costumes, a sceptre and the like.

The museum embodies both a tangible and symbolic place of memory. Its location and its treasures reflect the historical, cultural and artistic heritage of the Bamoun people. As French historian Pierre Nora suggested, such spaces become "places of memory" by intertwining material objects with symbolic meanings.

A pivotal moment in Bamoun history was the current King Njoya's decision to open royal treasures to the wider community, breaking with the tradition of exclusivity tied to specific cultural ceremonies. He also reformed Bamoun craftsmanship.

Originally located in the royal palace, itself an architectural marvel, the museum was relocated to a new building under King Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, the 19th monarch. This shift allowed for a more modern exhibition. Each ruler has contributed to preserving and expanding this collective heritage.

Under the current monarch the museum has undergone further modernization to align with contemporary practices.

AFRICAN DESTINATIONS – THE ROCK-HEWN CHURCHES, LALIBELA (ETHIOPIA)

The eleven Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela are monolithic churches located in the western Ethiopian Highlands near the town of Lalibela, named after the late-12th and early-13th century King Gebre Meskel Lalibela of the Zagwe dynasty, who commissioned the massive building project of 11 rock-hewn churches to recreate the holy city of Jerusalem in his own kingdom. The site remains in use by the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church to this day, and it remains an important place of pilgrimage for Ethiopian Orthodox worshippers. It took 24 years to build all the 11 rock hewn churches.

The 11 rock-hewn churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia, are 12th-13th century monolithic structures carved entirely out of solid volcanic rock in a "New Jerusalem". Commissioned by King Lalibela, they are famous for their subterranean, top-down architecture, serving as a major pilgrimage center for Ethiopian Orthodox Christians.

The Astounding Architecture

The rock-hewn churches of Lalibela Location are situated in the Lasta Mountains formerly known as Roha, in Northern Ethiopia. They were created by carving from the top down, separating the structure from the surrounding rock to create free-standing monolithic buildings (4 of the 11 initially created) or semi-monolithic spaces. They feature Axumite styles, including imitation windows and friezes.

The archaeological site consists of five churches north of the town's river Jordan, five south of the river, and one independently located. The churches in each grouping are connected by a system of tunnels and trenches.

Biete Giorgis, the eleventh church, is connected to the others by trenches.

The churches are divided into two main groups by a water channel (Northern and Southern), representing the River Jordan, connected by a network of tunnels and trenches.

These are the 11 Churches created:

				Current Status
1.	Biete Giorgis	House of St. George	Independent	(Still Standing)
2.	Biete Denagel	House of Virgins	North group	
3.	Biete Golgotha & Mikael (Twin Churches)	House of Golgotha Mikael	North group	(Still Standing)
4.	Biete Maryam	House of Mary	North group	(Still Standing)
5.	Biete Medhane Alem	House of the Saviour of the World	North group	Believed to be the largest monolithic church in the world. (Still Standing)
6.	Biete Meskel	House of the Cross	North group	
7.	Biete Abba Libanos	House of Abbot Libanos	South group	
8.	Biete Amanuel	House of Emmanuel	South group	
9.	Biete Gabriel-Rufael	House of Gabriel Raphael	South group	
10.	Biete Lehem	House of Holy Bread	South group	
11.	Biete Qeddus Mercoreus	House of St. Mercoreos	South group	

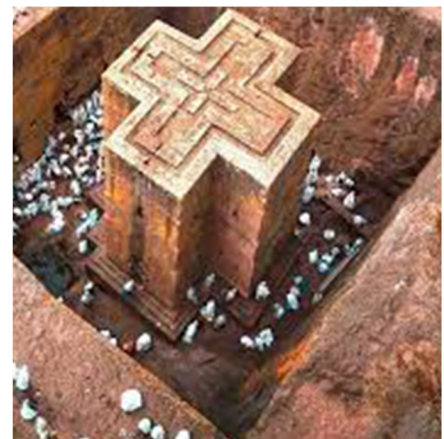
In Ethiopia, particularly within the context of the famous rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, Biete (also spelled Bete or Bet) is an Amharic word meaning *"House of" or "House"*

According to local tradition, Lalibela (traditionally known as Roha) was founded by an Agew family called the Zagwa or Zagwe in 1137 AD. Tradition holds that in Ethiopia prior to his accession to the throne, Gebre Meskel Lalibela was guided by Christ on a tour of Jerusalem, and instructed to build a second Jerusalem in Ethiopia. The churches are said to have been built during the Zagwe dynasty, under the rule of King Gebre Mesqel Lalibela (1181–1221 AD), although it is more likely that they evolved into their current form over the course of several phases of construction and alteration of preexisting structures. The rock-hewn churches at Lalibela are made through a subtractive process in which space is created by removing material. Out of the 11 churches, 4 are free-standing (monolithic) and 7 share a wall with the mountain out of which they are carved. The churches are each unique, giving the site an architectural diversity that is evident by the human figures of bas-reliefs inside Bet Golgotha, and the colorful paintings of geometrical designs and biblical scenes in Bet Mariam.

All 11 churches were the result of a process using the basic tools of hammers and chisels to excavate trenches surrounding the monolithic and semi-monolithic structures, as well as a system of tunnels which connected two separate groups of the churches with each other out of the scoriaceous basalt. The *"construction"* was done from top to bottom.

Religious Significance And Function

The Churches of Lalibela hold important religious significance for Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. Together they form a pilgrimage site with particular spiritual and symbolic value, with a layout representing the holy city of Jerusalem. The site continues to be used for daily worship and prayer, the celebration of religious festivals like Timkat and Genna, as a home to clergy, and as a place which increasingly brings together religious adherents and leaders every year.

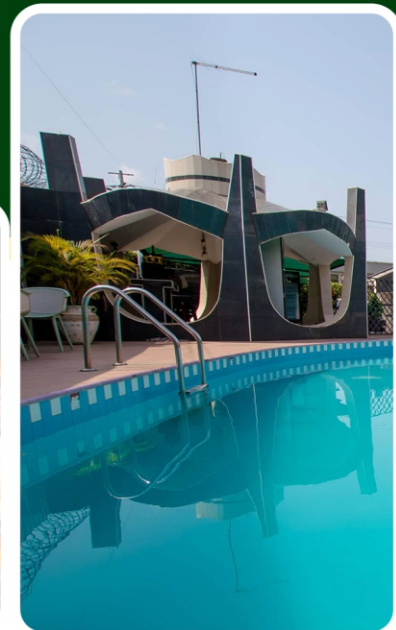




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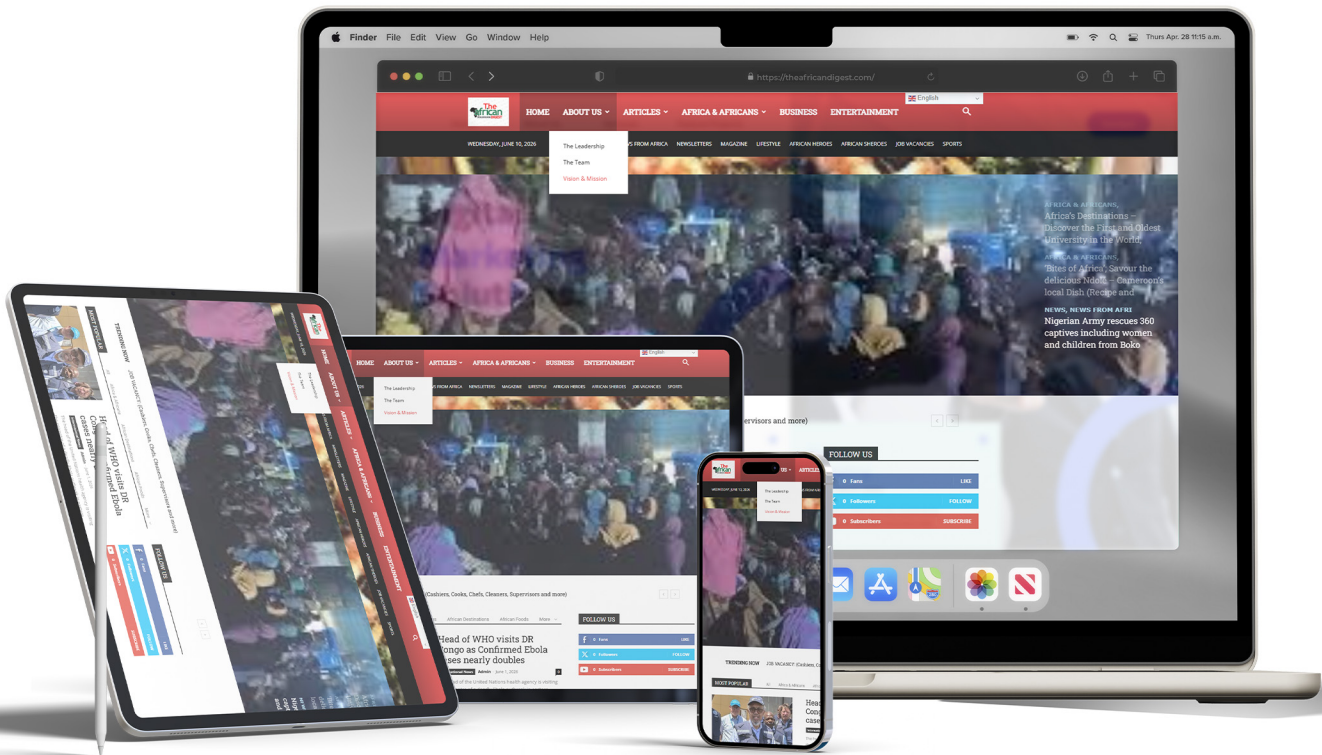
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THE AFRICAN DIGEST MAGAZINE INTERVIEW WITH

MR. NOSAKHARE TUNDE-ONI (NTO)



Meet Mr. Nosakhare Tunde-Oni – Managing Partner, NTO / Pan-African Strategist (Oil & Gas and African Market Expansion) and Thought Leader, in Conversation with Mr. Gustav Addo - Founder/Editor-in-Chief of The African Digest (Magazine, News & Media)

TAD: Hello Mr. Nosakhare Tunde-Oni. How are you doing today?

NTO: I'm doing well, thank you, Gustav. And thank you for having me. I think Africa is at a very important point right now, and the kind of conversations we're having and not having today will shape where the continent moves forward. So I appreciate platforms like this that create room for thoughtful discussions.

TAD: You are very right Mr. Nosakhare

TAD: But first, please enlighten us. Who is Mr. Nosakhare Tunde-Oni?

NTO: I'd describe myself as a strategist and someone deeply interested in Africa's growth and development.

Professionally, I've spent over twelve years in the oil and gas sector, working across different parts of the value chain. I currently work with Asharami Energy in East Africa, particularly in Rwanda.

Alongside that, I run NTO Advisory, where we help businesses across Africa with strategy and growth. I'm also a partner and Head of Growth at MyCo, a UK-based company where we're actively building an Africa-focused strategy.

Beyond business, I'm passionate about human development and mental wellness through TALAR Company. I strongly believe Africa's future won't only depend on economics or infrastructure, but also on the emotional and psychological health of its people.

At the heart of everything I do is one question: how do we help Africans think better, build better, and lead better?

TAD: Before the strategist the world knows today, who was young Nosa?

NTO: Young Nosa was very curious and observant.

I grew up in Lagos, Nigeria, and Lagos teaches you resilience, adaptability, and how to understand people and environments. But a lot of my foundation came from home. Both my parents were pastors, so discipline, structure, and values were a big part of how we were raised.

My father had a strong influence on me. He was always punctual, believed deeply in excellence, and consistency. One thing he always told us was never to rely on just one source of income because if that source fails, everything can collapse with it.

At the time, it sounded like simple financial advice, but looking back, it shaped how I think about systems, leverage, and long-term positioning today.

TAD: What early experiences or struggles had the greatest impact on the man you became?

NTO: A few things really shaped me. The first was the standard my father set. Excellence wasn't optional in our home. It was expected. It wasn't always easy growing up under that kind of discipline, but I'm grateful for it now because it trained me not to settle.

Another major lesson came from an early business partnership with friends. I was heavily invested emotionally, financially, and mentally in what we were building, but over time it became obvious that we didn't all share the same values or long-term vision. Eventually the partnership ended, and that experience taught me a lot about alignment, discernment, and the importance of building with people who are genuinely committed to the same direction.

TAD: Was there a defining moment when you realized you were meant for a different path?

NTO: Yes, although it wasn't one dramatic moment. Over time, I noticed that wherever I found myself, I naturally thought beyond the immediate task. I was always thinking about the bigger picture, why a business wasn't growing, why certain systems were failing, or what was missing beneath the surface.

I also realized people often came to me for clarity and direction, not just technical answers.

At some point, I stopped seeing that as something casual and started building intentionally around it.

TAD: How did your evolution into a strategist and Pan-African voice happen?

NTO: Honestly, through curiosity and experience. I've always read across different subjects: psychology, leadership, economics, history, business, philosophy, theology. I believe some of the best strategic thinkers are people who can connect ideas from

different areas and apply them to real-life problems.

But beyond reading, field experience played a major role.

Working across East and Central Africa exposed me to real operational realities, infrastructure gaps, market complexities, and the practical challenges businesses face on the continent.

That experience helped ground my thinking. Over time, people began to connect with the way I simplified complex ideas into practical insights that could actually be applied.

TAD: What was the hardest season of your entrepreneurial journey that people never saw publicly?

NTO: Probably the accumulation of failed businesses and broken partnerships.

It wasn't just one setback. It was multiple seasons of investing time, money, energy, and belief into things that didn't work out.

Some failures came from external factors. Others came from misalignment between the people involved.

What people don't often see is the emotional and mental weight that comes with rebuilding quietly while still showing up confidently in public.

But those experiences sharpened my discernment. They taught me to be more intentional about who I build with, what I commit to, and how alignment should be assessed before entering partnerships.

TAD: How would you describe the philosophy that guides your thinking and decision-making?

NTO: One phrase I come back to often is: clarity before speed. A lot of people move quickly without fully understanding where they're going or why they started in the first place.

For me, good decision-making starts with understanding yourself, understanding the environment you're operating in, and understanding the people around you.

I also believe strongly in intentional positioning. Not every opportunity is meant for you, and knowing what not to pursue is just as important as knowing what to build.

TAD: What do you think most Africans misunderstand about success and wealth creation?

NTO: I think many people see success as something accidental.

People often assume successful individuals were simply lucky or connected, but in reality, success is usually the result of consistent habits, discipline, and long-term thinking.

On wealth creation, I think too many people focus only on income instead of leverage.

The real question is: how do you build systems, assets, and opportunities that continue creating value beyond your direct effort?

That was one of the biggest lessons my father taught me growing up: never depend entirely on one stream of income.

Wealth grows when you learn how to multiply your output beyond your physical presence.

TAD: What are the biggest untapped opportunities Africa is sitting on today?

NTO: Human capital is still one of Africa's most underutilized assets.

Beyond that, I believe there are major opportunities in energy especially gas and LPG, digital infrastructure, education innovation, mental health and human development, intra-African trade, logistics, and storytelling.

Africa's story is still too often told by people who don't fully understand the realities on the ground.

The people who will shape the continent's future are those building ecosystems and infrastructure that others will depend on.

TAD: What has studying people taught you about life?

NTO: It has taught me that most people are not limited by lack of talent.



A lot of the real limitations are internal: fear, unresolved experiences, lack of identity, or lack of clarity. I've also learned that influence is less about charisma and more about understanding people deeply enough to connect with what truly moves them.

That's something I've reflected on extensively, including in my book *Treasure Maps*, where I explore purpose, direction, and self-discovery.

I genuinely believe self-awareness is one of the most underrated forms of power.

TAD: What truth about leadership do you think many successful people avoid saying publicly?

NTO: That leadership can be very isolating.

People often celebrate the visibility that comes with leadership, but they rarely talk about the emotional weight of carrying responsibility, making difficult decisions, and sometimes holding vision alone.

Another truth is that intelligence without character can be dangerous. I've seen highly competent people damage businesses, relationships, and institutions simply because integrity was missing.

TAD: Beyond the work — who is Nosa Tunde-Oni privately?

NTO: Honestly, I'm quite introverted. I enjoy quiet spaces, deep conversations, good coffee, jazz music, and books.

I am a realist, don't usually accept information at face value.

I also like taking time to think through ideas carefully before forming conclusions. I value privacy, meaningful relationships, and environments that allow me to think clearly.

I think people sometimes expect strategists to always be "on" but some of my best thinking happens in stillness.

TAD: What values do you refuse to compromise on?

NTO: Integrity. Excellence. Intentionality. Growth, and Treating people with dignity.

These values are deeply personal to me because they were modelled consistently by my parents, especially my father who modelled the first two so consistently that compromise on them genuinely feels wrong to me.

I also believe strongly in stewardship. Whatever platform or influence we have should create value beyond ourselves.

TAD: What is one misconception people have about you?

NTO: A lot of people assume I'm always analytical or constantly in "strategy mode."

But in reality, I genuinely care about people. Much of the work I do is driven by a desire to see Africans thrive not just survive or hustle endlessly, but truly thrive.

Another misconception is that clarity means I have everything figured out.

I don't. I simply take the work of thinking carefully about direction and alignment seriously.

TAD: What larger vision are you ultimately building toward?

NTO: A generation of African leaders who think differently about themselves, leaders who understand systems, think long-term, and build sustainably.

Whether through advisory work, TALAR, business, or conversations like this, the goal remains the same: helping people develop the internal capacity to lead and build well.

Africa doesn't just need more ambition. We also need more clarity, emotional health in leadership, and more institution builders rather than just building wealth.

TAD: If history were to remember you decades from now, what would you hope your legacy truly was?

NTO: I would hope people remember that I helped others think better.

Not just about business or success, but about themselves, their purpose, and Africa's future.

I'd also hope the systems, frameworks, and institutions I contributed to, continue creating value long after I'm gone.

And beyond all of that, I hope people would say I remained human through it all that the work made me more connected to people.



CELEBRATING WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY: THE CHALLENGES, RISKS AND A GLIMMER OF HOPE

By *Gustav Addo* – Editor-in-Chief, *The African Digest*

The Global media landscape is experiencing its most severe decline in 25 years, with the 2026 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index highlighting that more than half of the world's countries have "difficult or very serious" conditions for journalism. Both African and global media professionals currently face intense pressures ranging from physical dangers and legal harassment to economic instability.

Journalists globally and across Africa work under increasingly dangerous conditions. In addition to that, The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has reported that year 2025 was the deadliest year for journalists in over 30 years, with 129 journalists killed, particularly in conflict zones like Sudan and Palestine. Journalists are also increasingly facing online harassment and spyware surveillance, with 22 alerts affecting 48 journalists recently reported in Europe alone.

In Africa alone, 376 incidents of press freedom violations were documented in year 2024, involving over 480 journalists subjected to arrests, harassment, and violence, with 87% of incidents involving state actors. Why is this the case ?

Journalists in Africa often deal with

unique, compounding challenges that affect their ability to work safely and effectively. Some of these challenges include: Working in high-pressure environments, "Brown Envelope" Syndrome or "soli" as it's popularly called (where journalists accept money for coverage, which is often a symptom of low pay rather than purely corruption), Anti-State Charges - (African journalists being detained on alleged or perceived "anti-state" or "terrorism" charges, and a weakening media viability due to the shift to digital media over traditional media.

On the other hand, it is quite popularly alleged that Women journalists face specialized, severe challenges, often suffering from higher rates of sexual harassment. Other challenges faced by women journalists include: Online Misogyny (Women journalists being disproportionately targeted with online abuse, sexual threats, and mob-related harassment), and in some cases Limited Leadership Roles.

Globally, there is a steep decline in the zeal and quest for pure unfiltered journalism which is driven by both authoritarian and democratic shifts in and by Corporate Organisations, and Governments manipulated by their separate agendas.

The 2026 RSF index shows a "suffocation" of independent media, characterized by legal, political, and economic pressure. Over 60% of journalists report increasing self-censorship, largely driven by fear of reprisals and digital harassment. And the astronomic rise of AI-generated content has decreased digital traffic to legitimate news sites by 26.2% in countries like Nigeria, forcing media to fight for trust over pure volume.

Yet despite these grim situation, there are areas of improvement

and resilience. A Glimmer of Hope hopefully.

Some countries are showing Media resilience; for instance, Ghana rose 13 places in the 2026 RSF Index to 39th globally, highlighting a "rebound" after a period of instability. And African journalists are increasingly adopting "development journalism," focusing on social cohesion and holding institutions accountable, as noted in the 2026 IPI Africa report.

The African Digest Magazine celebrates all media personnel and journalists across the continent of Africa and the world as we thrive and strive to bring the right information, insights and narrative to the forefront, No matter whose Ox is gored.





AFRICAN DELICACIES – RED-RED (GHANA)

Red-Red (popularly known as Gob3 – pronounced /gor-beh/) is a beloved Ghanaian stew made from black-eyed beans cooked in red palm oil, tomatoes, and spices, resulting in a rich, reddish color. It is traditionally served with fried ripe plantains and often garnished with gari (toasted cassava flour).

Red-red is a Ghanaian bean stew served with a side of fried plantains and often garnished with gari, a coarse toasted cassava flour. It makes an altogether delightful dish, that is perfectly suitable for vegans and vegetarians alike, and is naturally gluten-free. If you would like to try something new, have a go at this.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of dry black-eyed peas (180-200g or 1 can of beans)
- 1/4 cup red palm oil
- 1 large onion
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 3 to 4 medium size, ripe tomatoes or 1 can of tomatoes
- 1 inch fresh ginger
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 scotch bonnet peppers
- 500ml vegetable stock
- salt to taste
- Water for soaking and boiling beans, extra as needed.

To Cook:

1. Soak the beans in fresh water for about 2 hours or overnight, this makes the cooking process quicker. You can also soak the beans in hot water for half an hour before cooking. Cook the beans for 30 to 45 minutes until soft.
2. Chop the vegetables. Saute the onions until caramelized then add the tomato paste.
3. Add the garlic, fry about 30 seconds then add the ginger and tomatoes in and fry until they have cooked down. This should take 5 to 10 minutes. The scotch bonnet peppers can be added with the tomatoes. They are potently spicy so I advise you add them whole with just a prick to regulate the heat. Remove when serving. For heat junkies or the more adventurous, chop up and add half, whole or all two scotch bonnets for mighty fiery flavour.
4. Add the cooked beans and vegetable stock then allow to simmer for half an hour on low heat. During this time you can prepare the plantains.
5. Take 4 plantains. Peel, slice, season with salt and deep fry or oven roast.
6. Serve the dish garnished with a little gari powder.



If you do not have easy access to palm oil, try coconut oil if it's in your pantry. A lot of flavour is infused from the oil you use, and palm oil gives this dish that original West African flavour. These ingredients should all be accessible at your local grocery store.

Source: *My Burnt Orange*

AFRICAN DELICACIES – HAWAWSHI (EGYPT)

Hawawshi [Pronounced /ha-wow-shii/] is a classic Egyptian street food consisting of pita bread (preferably Aish Baladi) stuffed with spiced minced meat, onions, peppers, and parsley, then baked until crispy. It is often described as a savory, spiced Egyptian hamburger inside a toasted pocket.

A famous Egyptian street food, it is also eaten throughout the Levant where it is known as arayas.

Authentic Egyptian Hawawshi Recipe

Prep time: 15 mins | Cook time: 20 mins | Yields: 4-6 sandwiches

Ingredients:

Meat: 1 lb (450g) ground beef (80/20 fat content is best)

Produce: 1 medium onion (finely minced), 1 green bell pepper (finely chopped), 1-2 hot peppers (optional), 2 cloves garlic (minced), 1/2 cup fresh parsley (chopped)

Spices: 1 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp black pepper, 1 tsp cumin, 1 tsp coriander, 1/2 tsp paprika, 1/4 tsp allspice or cardamom

Bread: 4-6 large pita bread loaves (Egyptian Baladi bread is ideal, but regular pita works)

Oil: Olive oil or butter for brushing

Instructions:

Preheat & Prep: Preheat oven to 400°F. Brush a large baking sheet with oil.

Make Filling: In a large bowl, combine the ground beef, minced onion, bell pepper, garlic, parsley, and spices. Mix well with your hands until fully combined, but do not overwork the meat.

Stuff Bread: Cut a small pocket in the edge of each pita. Divide the meat mixture into equal portions and stuff each pita, spreading the meat into a thin, even layer inside.

Oil and Bake: Brush both sides of each stuffed pita generously with olive oil or butter. Place on the baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes, flipping halfway through, until the bread is crispy and the meat is fully cooked.

Serve: Cut into halves or wedges and serve warm with tahini, pickled vegetables, or fresh salad.

Pro Tips:

Drain Veggies: For a crisper sandwich, squeeze excess liquid out of the minced onion and pepper mixture before adding to the meat.

Variations: Add chopped tomatoes (seeds removed) or a little grated cheese into the filling for extra flavor.

Hawawshi makes for a quick and easy dinner, loved by kids and adults alike!. Dip it in something creamy, like plain yogurt, labna, or tahina sauce. You can also have it with your favorite salad, Egyptian salata baladi, and some pickles!



AFRICAN DELICACIES – NDOLÉ (CAMEROON)

Ndolé is the national dish of Cameroon, a rich and creamy stew originating from the Sawa people of the coastal region. It is a nutritious blend of bitter leaves (washed to remove bitterness), raw groundnuts (peanuts), crayfish, and a variety of proteins like beef, smoked fish, or shrimp, cooked together in palm oil.

Ndolé, also written Ndole or Ndolè, is a Cameroonian dish consisting of stewed ground peanuts, crayfish, garlic, onions, and ndoleh leaves (indigenous to West and Central Africa). The dish originated in Douala, in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. Ndolé is widely regarded as the national dish of Cameroon.

Ndolé is typically cooked with fish or beef, and in some variations, may contain shrimp, in which case the dish is described as “regal”. The dish is traditionally accompanied by fried or boiled plantains, as well as bobolo or miondo, which are Cameroonian delicacies made of fermented ground manioc steamed in Marantaceae leaves and commonly formed into spiral shapes before serving. It is traditionally served with starch-heavy sides like Ugali (Ubugari) or rice to complement its rich, creamy, and nutty flavor.

Preparation

Ndolé is sometimes compared to spinach because of its green color and leafy texture, despite having different cooking methods. The dish is considered labor-intensive and time-consuming to prepare, although its ingredients are generally affordable.

The preparation of the dish involves boiling the ndoleh leaves two to three times in salted water with rock salt to reduce their natural bitterness. The leaves are then incorporated into a cooked sauce made from freshly ground peanut paste and crushed spices. Cooked meat cut into pieces, smoked fish (such as cod), or fresh or smoked shrimp may be added to the mixture. Among some Cameroonian immigrant communities abroad, it may be accompanied by Asian rice;

It is widely available in both home kitchens and top restaurants across Cameroon, acting as a true reflection of the country's diverse culinary traditions.



AFRICAN DELICACIES

- ISOMBE, THE STEW MADE FROM CASSAVA LEAVES (RWANDA)

Isombe is a traditional African stew originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which eventually spread to countries such as Rwanda and Burundi. It is a popular stew made with mashed cassava leaves and other ingredients such as tomatoes, onions, cilantro, garlic, Maggi seasoning and peanut butter. The dish often has a meaty flavor, although it contains no meat, due to the broth made from boiled beef bones.

This stew is very rich in protein, fiber, vitamin C, beta-carotene, potassium, iron, zinc, manganese and magnesium. It contributes to the formation of healthy bones and helps maintain good digestion.

Isombe is traditionally served alongside rice or beans.

RECIPE

Ingredients:

- 1 small cabbage
- 4 medium tomatoes
- 4 green onions
- 1 bunch of cilantro
- 1 head of garlic
- 1 Maggi seasoning cube
- 1 tablespoon of black pepper
- 1 tablespoon of garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 1/2 kg of beef bones for soup
- 2 teaspoons of peanut butter
- 1/2 kg of palm oil or vegetable oil

Total time: 2 hrs — Prep time: 30 min — Cook time: 1 hr 30 min

Method

Chop all the vegetables.

Boil 6 cups of water with the bones and all the ingredients to make a broth.

When the water begins to boil, add the cassava leaves and all the vegetables except the tomatoes.



When the water has almost completely evaporated, add the palm oil. Let it cook and boil until the oil has almost completely evaporated.

Add the chopped tomatoes and boil until almost dry. Finally, add the peanut butter.

Source: Mom Koumba

A BOARD GOVERNANCE PLAYBOOK: WHEN A PRIVATE COMPANY BECOMES CRITICAL NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

By Ethel Cofie – Founder/CEO, EDEL Technology Consulting / Founder, Women in Tech Africa Convenor, Future of Finance Dialogues (Africa)

Boards of companies that operate at national scale payment platforms, dominant mobile networks, and carrier-neutral data centres need to ask a different set of questions than they currently do. The standard governance framework asks about uptime, cyber risk, and compliance. When you become nationally critical, the questions become sharper.

A private system becomes nationally critical when its failure stops being a company incident and starts being a country incident. You know you are there when an outage affects multiple sectors simultaneously. When regulators convene industry players in emergency mode. When business continuity is no longer an internal SLA conversation, but a public-interest question.

Some examples of private-sector operators that often meet this criteria

This is not a claim that any specific firm has been formally designated as critical infrastructure. It is a practical observation: in many African markets, the private operators below often meet the criteria because of scale, substitutability, cross-sector dependency, and the speed at which disruption becomes a public-interest issue.

1. Subsea cable systems, landing operators, and international capacity providers (private)



Why they often qualify: multi-country spillover, limited short-term substitutes, long repair timelines. (internetsociety.org)

2. Real-time payment platforms operated by private, industry-owned operators

Why they often qualify: when real-time bank transfers become mainstream, they become part of the economy's "always-on" expectation.

Kenya example: PesaLink states it is operated by Integrated Payment Services Limited (IPSL), a subsidiary of the Kenya Bankers Association, providing 24/7 365 real-time payments for the banking industry. (pesalink.co.ke)

3. Dominant mobile network operators and mobile money platforms (private)

Why they often qualify: network effects + everyday commerce dependence; disruptions immediately affects households, merchants, and service delivery (which is why downtime starts to look like utility maintenance. (the-star.co.ke)

4. Large carrier-neutral data centres hosting essential workloads (private)

Why they often qualify: as regulated and public-interest workloads concentrate into a small number of facilities, continuity risk concentrates too—making resilience and disclosure expectations inevitable.

What event turns us from a national champion into a national risk overnight? If regulators asked for proof of our recovery capability tomorrow, could we provide it cleanly with test results, audit trails, and a dependency map? Do our supplier contracts contain the reporting and recovery responsibilities we would need to honour our obligations to the country? Have we tested recovery under realistic conditions, or only documented it?

The operators who are asking these questions proactively building what might be called an assurance pack, a national incident operating mode, and realistic exit readiness before they are forced to are the ones who will shape how regulation lands. The ones who wait will be regulated reactively, in the aftermath of the next incident, with less influence over the design of what follows.

The Author, Ethel Cofie is the Founder & CEO of EDEL Technology Consulting, Founder of Women in Tech Africa, and Convenor of the Future of Finance Dialogues (Africa). She writes on digital finance policy, technology governance, and Africa's digital economy architecture.

DOWNLOAD THE PLAY BOOK FOR A PROACTIVE BOARD APPROACH INSTEAD OF A REACTIVE APPROACH at www.blog.ethelcofie.com



THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY A FATHER GIVES A SON

*Emefa Ocloo – Founder, CoDe Counselling and Support Organization
(Advocate (Mental Health for Men & Boy Child Development) and Counselling Services (Divorce Issues, Child Custody Battles and Family Disputes)*

A father is a male parent of a child who plays an important role in the child or children's lives. These roles are very significant in the development of every child and the absence of it can have a huge negative impact on a child. We as a society do not talk about the importance of the Identity a son inherits from a father enough. This should be encouraged to help curtail fathers from walking away from the children.

A father defines a son's self-worth by acting as a "mirror" through which the child sees and understand their own value. A child builds the internal sense of "being enough" by the introduction of challenging activities, exploring, rewarding and validation from the father. The child learns how to be tough, build resilience, confidence and competence by these activities. This helps build masculinity in the boy child and also helps the child refuse any false identity that will be projected on him. A son also learns about identity by modeling the behaviour of his father. This is achieved by observation rather than direct instruction or imitation. He learns how to treat people by watching his father. How his father treats his mother, siblings or even neighbours sets the tone for his future human relations and romantic relationships. Positive human relations can go a long way to open doors for the child in future. Fathers also help mentor a son on how to handle frustration, disagreement and conflicts.

Using the right conflict resolution tools teaches a son constructive problem-solving, whereas "blowing up" teaches aggressive or disrespectful patterns. This helps the child build confidence and also helps him get out of troubles with less damages. Emotional maturity is attained when this is done right. The child navigates through life with a little ease.

Values, ethics and responsibilities are passed down to sons through their father's involvement in their lives. By observing a father's consistent career path and household duties goes a long way to influence a son in how he will run his own family in future. Morals, spiritual and life principles and knowledge guide a son's decision making and Manhood journey. This gives a son a great head start in life ahead of his peers with little or no influence.

The "Father Effect" has proven that, children with actively involved, positive father figures are 43% more likely to earn better grades in their academics and 80% of male children are less likely to be incarcerated. This is largely due to the stable behaviour blueprint from the fathers. The Father's presence also reduces anxiety in a child because it helps the child not feel lost or unsure of what his next step is or should be. Being unsure or unsafe creates severe anxiety in a child. The present father helps curtail this in a child because the child has received the necessary guidance and foundation.

The Author, Emefa Ocloo is the Founder/CEO of CoDe Counselling and an ardent Advocate for the Mental Health for Men and the Boy Child. She engages in Counselling Services regarding Divorces, Child Custody Battles and Family Disputes. You can reach Emefa via her direct mobile line +233 248072616 or via email



WHEN SILENCE TURNS COSTLY: THE HIDDEN WORKPLACE CRISIS AFRICAN LEADERS MUST CONFRONT

By Esther Fefoame

Africa's growth story is often told through infrastructure, entrepreneurship, digital innovation, and youthful ambition. But behind many of our promising institutions, whether corporate organizations, public sector agencies, factories, schools, or SMEs, there is a quieter story we do not discuss enough.

It is the story of workplace conflict.

Not dramatic confrontations or public strikes, but the everyday tensions that sit beneath the surface: grievances left unresolved, mistrust between management and staff, poor communication, supervisory abuse, or workers who no longer feel heard. And in many workplaces, these tensions are managed

with silence. Until silence becomes expensive.

I once worked with an organization facing what management described as "employee resistance." Productivity had dipped. Morale was low. Rumbblings of industrial unrest were growing. Management believed discipline had broken down. Workers believed fairness had.

When we began facilitated conversations, a different picture emerged. The conflict was not fundamentally about wages or conditions of service, though those concerns existed.

It was about dignity:

- i. Staff felt decisions affecting them were imposed without consultation.
- ii. Supervisors were using authority in ways employees experienced as intimidation.
- iii. Grievances had been raised, but not meaningfully addressed.

In truth, the dispute did not begin when tensions escalated. It began much earlier, in the moments nobody paid attention to. That is a lesson many institutions across Africa are learning too late.

Conflict Is Not Failure

Many organizations still treat conflict as evidence that something has gone wrong. But disagreement in itself is not dysfunction.

In healthy workplaces,

- i. conflict can reveal gaps in systems,
- ii. expose leadership blind spots, and prompt improvement.
- iii. It can be a signal, not a threat.

The real risk is unmanaged conflict. Yet too often, workplaces respond through hierarchy rather than dialogue.

- i. Questions are mistaken for insubordination.
- ii. Employee concerns are interpreted as agitation.
- iii. Trade unions are viewed through an adversarial lens.
- iv. And managers, under pressure to maintain control, and
- v. sometimes confuse authority with leadership.

But command alone does not build trust, Conversation does.

The High Cost of Ignoring "Small" Problems

Some of the most damaging workplace crises begin with

seemingly minor issues:

- i. A promotion perceived as unfair.
- ii. A transfer was poorly communicated.
- iii. A supervisor who leads through fear.
- iv. A grievance procedure nobody trusts.
- v. A worker repeatedly unheard.

None appears catastrophic on its own. Together, they can destabilize an institution.

Across the continent, organizations often invest heavily in strategy, technology, and operations, while underinvesting in the human systems that sustain performance. But no institution can outperform broken relationships indefinitely.

As many leaders discover, unresolved conflict has a cost: lower productivity, absenteeism, reputational damage, litigation, industrial action, and talent loss. And often, those costs were preventable.

A Leadership Imperative for a Changing Africa

Africa's workplace is evolving. A younger workforce is entering institutions with different expectations around voice, fairness, and accountability. Workplaces are becoming more diverse, more complex, and in many sectors, more union-aware. Old models of leadership built solely on hierarchy are under strain.

This demands a different leadership capability, one rooted not only in operational competence, but in relational intelligence.

Managers must learn to ask not merely, who is causing the problem? , But what is driving the tension?

That question changes outcomes.

Because most workplace conflict

is not really about the visible disagreement.

It is about what sits underneath:

- i. respect,
- ii. recognition, and fairness.

And those are leadership issues.

Building Healthier Workplace Cultures

There are practical shifts organizations can make. Grievance mechanisms must move beyond policy manuals and function as trusted systems.

Line managers need training not only in technical supervision, but in:

- i. Communication and
- ii. Conflict resolution.

Mediation and dialogue should be used early, before positions harden. Consultation must become part of decision-making, especially on matters affecting employees. And perhaps most importantly, organizations must stop viewing worker voice as a threat to authority. It can be an asset to stability.

Beyond Compliance

Conflict management should not be treated merely as an industrial relations requirement or compliance exercise. It is a business and governance imperative.

Organizations with healthy workplace relations tend to be:

- i. more resilient,
- ii. more productive, and
- iii. better positioned to navigate change.

That matters for Africa's development.

Because the future of work on this continent will not be shaped only by investment flows or innovation ecosystems. It will also be shaped by how well our institutions manage

people.

A Final Reflection

I often tell employers and workers alike that most workplace disputes do not begin in boardrooms or negotiation tables.

They begin in the overlooked:

- i. Conversations.
- ii. In unheard concerns.
- iii. In silence.

And when silence is allowed to deepen, the price is often paid by everyone.

African institutions cannot afford that cost. Not now

Because if the continent is to build strong organizations, competitive economies, and dignified work, conflict management can no longer sit at the margins of leadership.

It must move to the center.

About the Author

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THE ILLIQUIDITY TRAP IN THE REAL ESTATE MARKET: WHY PROPERTY-HEAVY PORTFOLIOS ACROSS AFRICA REQUIRES A RETHINK

Dr. Daniel Kontie – Executive Chairman, Africa Continental Engineering & Construction Network Ltd (ACECN)

As a real estate developer and consultant with extensive experience across major African markets, particularly Ghana, I have consistently highlighted the sector's strong profitability in many of my articles. However, there is a critical dimension of real estate investment in many African cities that industry players rarely disclose. Until now, I have not addressed it directly.

But today, I take a deliberate step to bring this issue to the attention of diaspora investors in particular and all new market entrants, being fully aware that such transparency may be met with resistance from fellow industry participants. Nonetheless, I remain firmly convinced that market integrity, trust and openness, though sometimes uncomfortable in the short term; are essential for building a resilient and credible real estate investment environment.

To be honest with you, the illiquidity challenge is a reality many developers, real estate brokers, professionals and consultants avoid mentioning. They focus only on profitability while concealing this significant risk for their parochial interests.

But before we go into the nitty-gritty of today's discussion, let me remind you that, the Africa Continental Engineering & Construction Network Ltd stands out as one of Ghana's leading real estate developers and consultants. From land acquisition, title registration, architectural design, general construction, property development, real estate investment advisory services et cetera, we provide a 360°C service experience.

If you are ready to move from interest to investment, kindly search on Google, "Africa Continental Engineering & Construction Network Ltd", visit the property page, explore available properties and reach out to our team for a swift professional service delivery. With thousands of serviced litigation-free parcels of land across Accra and key growth corridors, we are uniquely positioned to help you unlock value in residential, commercial and industrial real estate. Now, let us go into the substantive discussion.

A few years ago, I was mandated to sell a 5-bedroom property in Accra, Tema Community 25 behind the Devtraco Estate valued at approximately USD \$200,000, an asset that on paper reflected the strong profitability and value appreciation typical of Ghana's real estate market. However, despite being well-located and competitively priced, the property took nearly 4 years to sell even with six other agents engaged alongside myself. This highlights a critical disconnect between asset value and market liquidity in Ghana's real estate market. Over this period, the property went through repeated cycles of listing, negotiations and several failed closures, effectively locking in the client's capital. This challenge is not isolated. I am currently handling seven repossessed properties for a financial institution across prime areas such as East Legon, Trassaco Valley Estate, Tema

and after more than two years, none has been sold. These experiences underscore a fundamental paradox in Ghana's real estate sector, whilst property investment remains highly profitable; it is significantly illiquid, often undermining the very essence of investment.

This experience is not anecdotal in the narrow sense, it is emblematic of a broader structural issue within Ghana's real estate market and indeed, across Lagos, Kampala, Nairobi, Cairo, Kigali, Addis Ababa etc. It points to a critical but under-discussed dimension of property investment across Africa: illiquidity.

The Illusion of Wealth: When Valuation does not Equal Liquidity

Property investment discourse in many African prime cities is heavily skewed toward appreciation. Conversations frequently highlight rising land values in prime locations in Lagos, Accra, Kampala, Nairobi etc, with sustained demand and rapid development in growth corridors. These narratives are not without merit, for instance, Ghana's urban property markets have delivered substantial capital gains over the past two decades.

However, appreciation alone does



not equate to financial utility. A property may triple in value over five (5) years, yet if it cannot be sold or leveraged within a reasonable time frame, its economic usefulness becomes severely constrained. In fact, empirical evidence suggests that in markets like Ghana, price corrections often occur not through sharp declines but through reduced transaction volumes and extended selling periods (Africanvestor, 2026). In effect, liquidity not price, absorbs market shocks.

This creates a persistent illusion of wealth. Investors appear financially robust based on asset valuations, yet their ability to deploy that wealth in response to real-world needs remains limited.

The Human Cost of Illiquidity

The implications of illiquidity extend beyond abstract financial theory into the lived realities of investors. During the 4-year period it took me to sell the property in question, any urgent need for capital, whether for healthcare, education or business investment would have exposed a fundamental vulnerability.

In such scenarios, the asset's nominal value becomes irrelevant. What matters is access. Without the ability to convert property into cash quickly or to borrow against it efficiently, the investor is left in a paradoxical position; asset-rich but cash-strapped. This phenomenon is increasingly recognized across African markets, where property ownership is often seen as a primary store of wealth but not necessarily a flexible financial instrument.

Structural Drivers of Illiquidity in Africa's Property Market

The illiquidity observed in Africa's real estate sector is not incidental; it is the product of several reinforcing structural constraints. Mortgage penetration remains fantastically low, with fewer than 5% of homeowners accessing formal housing finance. High interest rates, historically exceeding 30% have made borrowing prohibitively expensive for most households. As a result,

the market is dominated by cash transactions, which significantly limits the pool of potential buyers and slows transaction cycles.

Compounding this is the underdevelopment of housing finance systems across Africa. The absence of a robust secondary mortgage market means that financial institutions cannot easily offload mortgage risk or recycle capital. This constrains lending capacity and reinforces a cautious approach to property-backed financing.

Banks in turn, exhibit understandable reluctance to extend credit against residential property. The reason is this, when defaults occur, lenders are left holding collateral that is itself difficult to liquidate as it is the case with the financial institution's repossessed properties I mentioned earlier, which I have listed for the past 2 years without a single sale. Empirical studies confirm that the usability of landed property as collateral is heavily influenced by its marketability and legal clarity (Heliyon, 2023).

In a market characterized by slow sales and complex title verification processes, collateral risk becomes another central concern. Legal and institutional inefficiencies across many African countries further exacerbate the problem. Lengthy land registration procedures, overlapping claims and protracted dispute resolution timelines increase transaction costs and delay asset transfers even when buyers are identified. Deals can stall or collapse due to title uncertainties.

Finally, the demand structure of the market is relatively narrow. High-value properties often depend on a limited pool of buyers, including diaspora investors and high-net-worth individuals. This concentration reduces market depth and contributes to extended time-on-market, particularly during periods of economic uncertainty (MarcoPolis, 2023).

Why Property Markets are more Liquid in Developed Economies

In contrast, property markets in

countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom operate within highly developed financial ecosystems that enhance liquidity. Mortgage systems in these markets are deep and accessible, enabling a broad base of buyers to participate. More importantly, homeowners have access to financial instruments that allow them to unlock the value of their properties without selling them. Home equity lines of credit, refinancing options, and equity release schemes provide flexible avenues for accessing capital. These systems are supported by secondary mortgage markets, where loans are bundled into securities and sold to investors. This mechanism allows banks to recover liquidity quickly and extend further credit, thereby sustaining market activity.

Legal frameworks also play a crucial role. Efficient foreclosure processes and enforceable property rights reduce uncertainty for lenders and investors alike. In addition, centralized and digitized property listing platforms improve transparency, facilitate price discovery and shorten transaction timelines. Together, these elements create an environment in which property is not only a store of value but also a readily accessible financial resource.

The Missing Middle in Africa: No Path between Ownership and Liquidity

One of the defining characteristics of Africa's property market is the absence of intermediary financial mechanisms. Property owners typically face a binary choice; either sell the asset outright or forgo access to its value.

There is limited availability of structured products such as home equity loans, refinancing options or reverse mortgages. This lack of financial intermediation prevents property from functioning as a dynamic asset within the broader economy. As a result, wealth remains locked in physical structures rather than being mobilized for productive use.

Macroeconomic Implications: When Capital Remains Trapped

The consequences of property illiquidity extend beyond individual investors to the broader economy. When significant portions of household wealth are tied up in illiquid assets, the flow of capital into productive sectors is constrained. Research indicates that credit access remains a major challenge for businesses in Africa, with a substantial proportion of enterprises facing financing limitations (PMC Housing Study, 2023).

In this context, the inability to leverage property assets for credit represents a missed opportunity for economic expansion. Illiquidity therefore, is not merely market inefficiency; it is a structural drag on economic growth.

Toward a more Liquid Property Market: A Reform Agenda for Africa

Addressing illiquidity in Africa's real estate sector requires a coordinated and systemic approach. A critical first step is the development of a secondary mortgage market. By enabling financial institutions to securitize and sell mortgage assets, such a system would improve liquidity within the banking sector and expand access to housing finance.

Equally important is the digitization of land and title registration systems. Reliable and transparent property records would reduce transaction risks, enhance collateral quality and accelerate deal execution, or better still, the introduction of title insurance policies to mitigate the risk of title insecurity, a common phenomenon in Africa's property market.

The introduction of property-backed financial products, including home equity loans and structured refinancing options, would provide property owners with alternatives to outright sale. These instruments would allow investors to access capital while retaining ownership, thereby improving financial flexibility. Legal reforms are also essential. Streamlining land dispute resolution and strengthening enforcement mechanisms would reduce uncertainty and increase investor confidence.

Finally, the establishment of a cen-

tralized property exchange or listing platforms in various African states could significantly improve market transparency and liquidity. By standardizing information and facilitating transactions, such a platform would shorten time-on-market and broaden participation.

Conclusion: Rethinking Property as both Asset and Constraint

Property investment in most African cities remains a compelling proposition, but it must be approached with a clear understanding of its limitations. The central issue is not whether property appreciates, it often does, but whether that appreciation can be translated into usable wealth within a meaningful time frame.

Investors and developers must therefore broaden their analytical framework; whilst policymakers must rethink the approach to these structural challenges. It is no longer sufficient to ask what an asset might be worth in the future. Equally important is the question of accessibility. How quickly and efficiently can that value be realized or leveraged when needed.

Until the structural constraints that underpin illiquidity are addressed, property investment across major African cities will continue to function as largely static store of value rather than a dynamic financial asset. Recognizing this reality is the first step toward making more informed and resilient property investment decisions for investors, developers and policymakers across the African continent.

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AFRICA CONTINENTAL
ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION
— NETWORK —

2026 Budget Insights

The 2026 Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Government of Ghana

November 2025



The better the question. The better the answer. The better the world works.



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Resetting The
Economy For
Growth, Jobs
and Economic
Transformation

Economic Transformation,” aims at Consolidating Macroeconomic Stability, Accelerating Economic Transformation and Job Creation, and Strengthening Security and Social Sectors for Inclusive Growth.

In this publication, we provide a comprehensive review of the budget, including an analysis of historical performance, budget estimates, key initiatives introduced, and our perspective on selected measures. We trust you will find these insights valuable as Ghana charts its course toward sustainable growth and transformation.

A REPORT ON GHANA'S 2026 BUDGET INSIGHTS

The 2026 Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Government of Ghana.

A Message from the Country Managing Partner; Emmanuel Adekahlor - Country Managing Partner, Ernst & Young (EY)

We are pleased to share EY's Budget Insights following the presentation of the 2026 Budget Statement and Economic Policy to Parliament by the Honourable Minister for Finance.

This year's budget, themed *“Resetting the Economy for Growth, Jobs and*

Global Economic Outlook

The global economic environment remains uncertain, shaped by intersecting geopolitical risks and rapid technological realignment. Global economic growth is projected to slow down from 3.2% in 2025 to 3.1% in 2026, with advanced economies experiencing modest expansion amid persistent policy

uncertainty.

The United States is expected to grow by 2.1% in 2026, supported by a resilient labour market, while Europe faces slower recovery. Emerging markets continue to anchor global momentum, with China and India projected to grow at 4.8% and 6.2% respectively.

Overview of Ghana's Economic Performance - 2025

Despite global economic headwinds, Ghana delivered strong progress in 2025, underscoring resilience and renewed macroeconomic discipline. Real GDP growth reached 6.3% in the first half of the year, driven by robust performance in the services and agricultural sectors. Notably, non-oil GDP expanded by 7.8%, highlighting the growing importance of domestic production and consumption rather than overdependence on the extractive sector.

Inflation fell sharply to 8% by October, marking the first return to single-digit inflation in four years. This improvement was supported by prudent fiscal and monetary policies, enhanced food supply, and relative exchange rate stability. Interest rates also began to ease, with the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) declining to 21.5% and the Ghana Reference Rate (GRR) dropping to 17.93% by November. Treasury bill rates fell significantly—from around 25% to 10.6% by October.

Public debt showed meaningful improvement, hovering around 45%, aided by ongoing restructuring efforts, cedi appreciation, and reduced reliance on external borrowing. The IMF-supported programme continues to serve as a strong policy anchor, with notable progress on structural benchmarks and renewed access to programme financing.

Ghana's 2026 Budget

The Government of Ghana (GoG) has signalled a clear commitment to consolidating macroeconomic stability while pursuing transformative interventions across key sectors. The budget aims at decisive shifts from recovery to transformation; resilience to productivity; and from stability to jobs.

The 2026 Budget outlines bold initiatives including:

- i. VAT reforms and review/consolidation of other tax laws
- ii. The Agricultural Transformation Programme,
- iii. The Big Push infrastructure agenda
- iv. 24-Hour Economy and Accelerated Export Development initiative
- v. Integrated Oil Palm Development Policy, and major social and public safety interventions.
- vi. Expenditure rationalization which includes capping non-essential spending, refocusing earmarked funding on high impact job-creating
- vii. Projects and commitment control to contain build-up of arrears
- viii. Establishment and operationalization of a Value for Money Office (VfMO)

For the GoG to successfully implement these transformative measures, attention must be focused on a number of areas including the following critical ones:

A. Fiscal Discipline

Fiscal discipline is vital for sustainable economic management. Ghana's best economic outcomes have often aligned with IMF programme periods, highlighting the need for accountability and prudent spending. This year's

budget prioritizes fiscal discipline, but success depends on effective implementation of expenditure controls, Value for Money initiatives, and strong commitment control to keep spending within approved limits and achieve stated goals. Ghana's ability to uphold the fiscal discipline achieved under the IMF programme after its exit is vital for lasting macroeconomic stability

B. Ensuring Effective Implementation of Revenue Measures

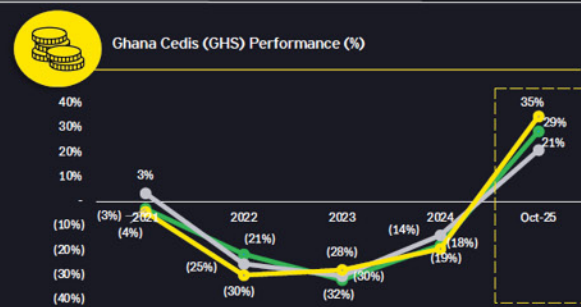
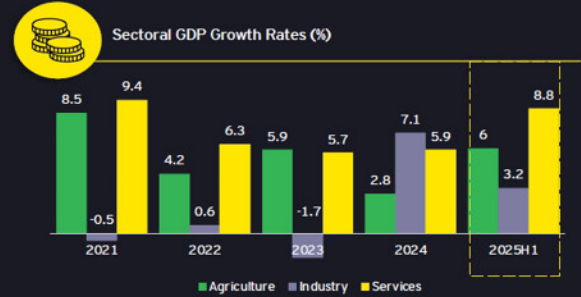
While certain tax reforms—such as the reduction in the effective VAT rate—may lead to short-term revenue declines, these measures are designed to simplify compliance, improve efficiency, and ultimately broaden the tax base. Enhanced compliance and streamlined processes are expected to drive revenue growth over time. Additionally, the budget introduces complementary strategies, including measures to curb leakages at the ports. Successful execution of these revenue-enhancing initiatives is critical to financing the programmes outlined in the budget without jeopardizing overall economic stability.

C. Building Buffers and Driving Structural Transformation

Ghana's economy remains susceptible to external shocks. With current favourable conditions—particularly strong performance in gold and cocoa prices on international markets—this is an opportune moment to build adequate fiscal and foreign exchange buffers to safeguard against future volatility.

In the medium to long term, however, the priority must shift towards accelerating structural transformation. Diversifying the economy beyond traditional sectors will be critical to reducing

Snapshot | Ghana Economic Performance: Historical Trend



5

EY 2026 Budget Insights

Source: 2026 Budget Statement, Ghana Statistical Service, Bank of Ghana, EY Analysis



vulnerability to global disruptions and positioning Ghana for sustainable, inclusive growth.

D. Ensuring Value for Money in Public Expenditure

As with previous budgets, the 2026 Budget introduces several initiatives that will require significant GoG spending. It is imperative that the Ministry of Finance and all relevant MDAs implement robust expenditure control systems and

Snapshot | Proposed Fiscal Measures - Expenditure

The fiscal expenditure measures to be introduced by the Government of Ghana (GoG) as part of the 2026 budget statement include:

- 01 **Budget Preparation and Implementation:** Conduct a detailed review and audit of the budget preparation and implementation process to improve transparency, prevent arrears accumulation and ensure value for money.
- 02 **GHANEPS-GIFMIS Integration:** Fully roll out electronic procurement linked to GIFMIS to enhance real-time expenditure control.
- 03 **Capping Non-Essential Expenditure:** Contain recurrent spending by limiting foreign travel, workshops, and vehicle procurement.
- 04 **Rationalisation of Earmarked Funds:** Redirect earmarked funds to high-impact, job-creating sectors including roads, energy, agriculture, and education.
- 05 **Authorisation Controls:** No new projects to commence without approved budget or funding to prevent accumulation of arrears.
- 06 **Prioritisation of Capital Investment:** Focus capital expenditure on infrastructure and productive sectors under the Big Push and 24-Hour Economy programmes.
- 07 **Payroll Validation and Cleanup:** Sustain payroll audit exercises to remove ghost names and eliminate payroll fraud.
- 08 **Implementation of Arrears and Commitments Audit Recommendations:** Adopt EY and PwC audit recommendations to prevent accumulation of new arrears.
- 09 **Implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA):** Strengthen fiscal discipline and accountability through the operationalisation of the FRA and stronger sanctions for non-compliance.
- 10 **Strengthen Social Protection Systems:** Safeguard allocations to LEAP, NHIS, School Feeding, and Free SHS to foster inclusive growth and shared prosperity.
- 11 **Ensuring Value for Money:** Enforce sanctions under Sections 96 to 98 of the Public Financial Management (PFM) Act, particularly for breaches relating to arrears accumulation and non-compliance.
- 12 **Quarterly Expenditure Reviews:** Institutionalise quarterly expenditure reviews and real-time audit monitoring to prevent overspending and improve efficiency.

12

EY 2026 Budget Insights

Source: 2026 Budget Statement, EY Analysis



Snapshot | Summary of Key initiatives to Drive the Resetting for Growth, Jobs and Economic Transformation

01	Big Push		Agricultural Transformation Programme	08
02	24-Hour Economy and Accelerated Export Development initiative		Farmer Service Centres initiative	09
03	Ghana Gold Board		Digital Land Administration Reform	10
04	Integrated Oil Palm Development		Gas-to-Power Transformation	11
05	Rural Electricity Acceleration and Urban Intensification Initiative		Retooling of the Ghana Armed Forces	12
06	Oil Palm Development Finance		Ghana Medical Care Trust (MahamaCares) Fund for NCDs	13
07	Value for Money Office (VfMO)		Ghana Secondary Learning Improvement Programme (GSLIP)	14



Value for Money (VfM) processes to minimize waste, enforce compliance with procurement standards, and guarantee optimal returns on every cedi spent.

Projects must undergo thorough professional evaluation and assessment before any financial commitments are made. Similarly, social intervention programmes should be carefully designed and reviewed to ensure effectiveness and sustainability.

The establishment of the Value for Money Office (VfMO) has the potential to be a transformative measure—provided it is structured and implemented effectively, rather than becoming an additional layer of bureaucracy within the public financial management framework.

We commend the GoG for ongoing initiatives such as validating expenditure arrears and conducting payroll audits to eliminate ghost names, which are critical steps toward achieving VfM and strengthening fiscal accountability.

Looking ahead

Ghana's economy is projected to grow by 4.9% in 2026, with GDP expected to reach GHS1.5 trillion.

The services, industry and agriculture sectors will continue to serve as the pillars of growth, contributing 47%, 31% and 22% respectively. Inflation is expected to remain anchored within the medium-term target band of $8\% \pm 2$, supported by enhanced food supply and strengthened policy coordination. The fiscal deficit is projected to narrow to 4.0%, while tax revenue is expected to account for most of the GoG financing, reaching GHS223.9 billion. These indicators reflect cautious optimism anchored in fiscal discipline, policy reforms, and improving investor sentiment.

As always, our goal at EY is to empower businesses, GoG, and communities to navigate this evolving landscape with clarity and confidence. Our multidisciplinary teams stand ready to support clients across tax advisory, strategy and transactions, risk and assurance, consulting, digital transformation, and sustainability. Whether through navigating the implications of new tax reforms, supporting sector-specific transformation programmes, or providing insights on emerging risks and opportunities, we remain committed to helping organisations unlock value and achieve long-term resilience.

To see the full Report, download it on our website www.theafricandigest.com

Source: EY (Ghana)

THE 18-HOUR MIRACLE: INSIDE KENYA'S HISTORIC SURGERY THAT BUILT A NEW FACE (TRUE STORY)

By Yvonne Kawira, Willow Health Media (Kenya)

Behind closed doors of the operating theatre at Nairobi Hospital, a surgical team is attempting a medical first ever documented for Kenya and Africa: Rebuilding a face. Not repairing. No, rebuilding the 29-year-old face of Lucy Gathoni. The surgical team performed the first total facial skeleton resection, reconstruction and rehabilitation in the world

for free, but the custom titanium implants for Lucy Gathoni's surgery were imported from Belgium and cost Ksh6.8 million (**approx. \$53,000 USD**).

The surgical team performed the first total facial skeleton resection, reconstruction and rehabilitation in the world for free, but the custom titanium implants for Lucy Gathoni's surgery were imported from Belgium and cost Ksh6.8 million.

It all started with a small swelling on Lucy's jaw. She was 12. They didn't think much of it. But it shortly began to grow. It had to be removed. See, for 17 years, Lucy struggled with the growing tumour that limited her speech and massively distorted her face.

Medics at Othaya Subcounty Hospital referred Lucy to Nyeri Provincial General Hospital (PGH), but "Every time it was removed, it grew back bigger," recalls her mother, Peris Mwaura.

The swelling grew, distorting her jaw, stealing her breath, eventually erasing the face she was born with.

"We initially thought it was cancerous," says her uncle, James Mwaura.

The tumours were benign, and the relief that came with negative cancer results was short-lived as the growth was such that "I cannot breathe well," Lucy said at the family's Othaya home.

"I breathe through the mouth. I eat soft meals," she told Willow Health Media in January, 2025. The operation was in April. Willow has been documenting her surgery journey ever since, in a medical case riddled with escalating and disrupted domestic life.

In 2017, Rev Fr Joseph Waithaka walked into Lucy's life and refused to walk out

"My marriage was affected because of Lucy's illness," says her mother. "Her father said we should leave his home because they don't have sick people where he comes from. He left in 2008 and has never returned."

Single, broke and asthmatic, Peris carried the weight alone. "It stresses me," she says. "I ask God for strength. I have to be strong for my child. What



else can I do?"

But in 2017, Rev Fr Joseph Waithaka walked into Lucy's life and refused to walk out. "Lucy is my friend," says Fr Waithaka. "I saw her condition, and I requested to see the background, then we organised a harambee. I met Prof Symon Guthua and explained to him. We made a decision to assist Lucy." They also reached out to Dr Margaret Mwashu, a prosthodontist, and brought Lucy's case to Archbishop Anthony Muheria, who approached the Nairobi Hospital through Prof Guthua.

Prof Guthua explains the magnitude was what was at stake as "Nobody has done this, so we want to make sure that we do it the right way and reconstruct her back." Lucy's small body frame also meant "There's no place you can start going for bones to reconstruct her. It's not there. Right? And you make her even weaker. You make her disabled. So, we have patient-specific implants made according to how she is now."

The hospital's Director of Medical Services and Research, Mr Samuel Odede, remembers the challenge of "Trying to get the funds to perform this corporate social responsibility, but we managed."

Digitally mapping and isolating the exact shape of the patient's skull and bone

But first, the surgical team needed custom-made titanium implants to reconstruct her face. These alone had to be flown from Belgium and designed specifically for Lucy's reconstructed face. It cost Ksh5 million (approx. \$ 38,850 USD). Next came planning the surgery, "A gruelling 18 hours, pro bono, bless them," Odede says. "These are our true heroes and heroines."

The surgery was Lucy's fifth and, if successful, would be her last. The surgical team guided her through the surgery using a 3D model, detail-

ing each cut and reconstruction, her mother absorbing every word.

Michael Mwashu, the biomedical engineer behind the implant's designs, explains how the process starts by digitally mapping and isolating the exact shape of the patient's skull and bone. Next, the damaged or diseased portion of bone is virtually identified and removed from this digital model. Finally, a custom implant is designed and created to precisely fit the space left after the virtual removal.

Though Kenya produces raw titanium in Kwale and Kilifi, it cannot manufacture the complex medical implants required. The titanium plates were thus engineered and sent from Belgium. Base Titanium recently completed its final bulk shipment in February 2025, ending eleven years of mining operations after depleting ore reserves.

Operating theatre filled with rhythmic clinking as specialists moved with precision

Her mother, Peris Mwaura, sits gazing blankly in the waiting bay, eyes fixed on the doors that opened up for her second-born daughter. The surgery took place after morning prayers on Good Friday, April 18, 2025.

8:35am: The surgeons made the first incision. But the size of the tumour caused breathing challenges as "We could not contain her airway," said the anesthesiologist, Dr Kinyua Gathukia. "The whole face was disfigured. Airway was a primary problem."

9:00am: They had performed a tracheotomy, inserted feeding and urinary tubes, and sterilised her skin. With eye drops applied and surgical lines marked on her face, the stage was set for the marathon surgery.

9:55am: The theatre was filled with the rhythmic clinking of instruments and the steady beeping of machines.

Each specialist moved with precision.

The upper jaw tumour, 1.1 kgs, came out first. It had been pressing against Lucy's cranial base. Then out came the larger one from the lower mandible, a 2.2 kg tumour. The third was smaller but significant and added to the horror. Combined, the tumours weighed 3.3kgs roughly 10 per cent of Lucy's entire body weight.

For perspective, imagine carrying a newborn baby attached to your face.

Together, the tumours distorted both her upper and lower jaws, a complexity no Kenyan surgeon had faced before.

3:40pm: All the tumours were out.

When the final mass was lifted from Lucy's face, the operating room erupted in applause. But the hardest work was just beginning.

Upper tumour had grown into her skull base, the lower one was a dense web of blood vessels

Prof Symon Guthua led the resection. Dr Mwashu guided the placement of Lucy's prosthesis. Both jaws were reconstructed using patient-specific implants designed through virtual resections and 3D modelling.

"Usually, the tumour affects only one jaw," explained Prof Guthua. "But here, it was both, and the growth was highly complex."

The upper tumour had grown into her skull base. The lower one was a dense web of blood vessels, posing a severe bleeding risk. "That was something that worried us," Prof Guthua recalls. "But we were able to control the bleeding."

5:15pm: The reconstruction began as surgeons inserted titanium plates into the left upper jaw first, then the right. They placed the upper denture and secured it with screws. Then the mandible.

Late into the night, they closed the



incisions and wired her jaw shut. This stabilised the new titanium framework and allowed her facial muscles to reattach properly.

1:20am, Saturday: 18 and a half hours later, Lucy's head was wrapped in gauze.

1:40am: Lucy was wheeled out of the operating theatre.

This was a historic surgery. Only one other person in the world had ever come close. The patient had received a complete lower jaw replacement. And that design was different.

Prof Guthua's version included special attachments where Lucy's jaw muscles could grip and move the new titanium bone. Every detail was designed to last, to move smoothly, to work with her body. Every cut, every stitch, every placement of the titanium plates had to be perfect.

"It's about changing one patient at a time," Dr Mwashu says quietly. *"Really, the whole life. Because she's a young lady who has struggled. Breathing was interfered with, feeding had been interfered with, and how she looks. It has interfered with the quality of her life."*

Her jaw was rebuilt, though still fed by a tube, she was finally gaining weight

After a two-day recovery in the ICU instead of the expected four, Lucy remained in the hospital for another two weeks before discharge.

At her first review, Prof Guthua handed her a mirror, revealing her new face. The tumour that had defined her was gone, her jaw was rebuilt, and her muscles were working. Though still fed by a tube, she was finally gaining weight.

Her transformation was so profound that she will likely need a new national ID or identification documents. The face in the mirror is no longer the face on her documents.

Friends remember the cheerful cashier Lucy once was, hidden behind her burden. Now, they dream with her.

Lucy Gathoni is now learning to live in a body that finally feels like her own

Susan Wamaitha from her church longs to see Lucy's full smile and potential restored, since at 29, *"She is still young, has her whole life ahead of her."* Her best friend Peninah Mugure laughs as Lucy shares new dreams of travel, to the US, to everywhere, and a simple, normal life.

A normal life. Such a small phrase for such an enormous dream.

In Kenya today, while the Social Health Authority now covers the surgical procedure itself for complex cases like Lucy's maxillofacial reconstruction, including hospital admission, ICU care, and anaesthesia under specialised tariffs reaching up to 392,000 shillings, a critical gap remains. The patient-specific titanium implants essential for facial reconstruction, valued at 5 million shillings and flown in from Belgium, fall outside SHA coverage. This forces families into fundraising through harambees and community support.

Lucy's life-changing surgery only became possible through extraordinary circumstances: the Catholic Church under Archbishop Anthony Muheria's leadership, over 20 specialists at Nairobi Hospital donating their expertise, and an 18-and-a-half-hour operation performed entirely pro bono. Her case highlights both the promise of universal health coverage and the sobering reality that for the most critical interventions, Kenyans still depend on charity and goodwill rather than guaranteed access to care.

Lucy Gathoni is now learning to live in a body that finally feels like her own. She is learning to eat without pain, to breathe without a struggle

and look in the mirror without flinching.

She is also appreciating that miracles happen even where medicine, faith, and engineering are needed the most. *"We are not yet there, but we believe with God's grace and guidance, we shall be there,"* said Fr Waithaka.

Lucy isn't there yet, but she's walking toward it one reconstructed step at a time. *"I am so happy. I will invite you to a Thanksgiving Mass. And you must come and celebrate with me,"* she told the Willow Health Media team during a post-surgery shoot in Othaya, where she continues her recovery, surrounded by family, faith and the second chance at life, with a new face.

Photo Captions

Photo 1: Lucy Gathoni's jaw started swelling when she was 12 years old, and the tumour continued to grow over time. [Photo: Courtesy]

Photo 2: 29-year-old Lucy Gathoni with her mother, Peris Mwaure, during an interview with Willow Health Media at their home in Othaya, Nyeri County. [Photo: Timon Abuna, WHM]

Photo 3: Custom-made titanium implants used to reconstruct Lucy Gathoni's face. [Photo: Timon Abuna, WHM]

Photo 4: A 3D model of Lucy's tumour. [Photo: Timon Abuna, WHM]

Photo 5: Surgeons reconstruct Lucy Gathoni's face in an operating theatre at the Nairobi Hospital. [Photo: Timon Abuna, WHM]

Photo 6: Prosthodontist Dr Margaret Mwashu and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon Prof Symon Guthua during Lucy Gathoni's post-operation review at Nairobi Hospital. [Photo: Brian Wekesa, WHM]

Photo 7: Lucy Gathoni with her

mother, Peris Mwaura, during a consultation with Prof Symon Guthua before her surgery. [Photo: Timon Abuna, WHM]

Photo 8: Lucy Gathoni during a consultation with Prof Symon Guthua after the reconstructive surgery. [Photo: Timon Abuna, WHM]

Photo 9: Part of the team behind Lucy's facial reconstructive surgery. From left to right: Michael Mwasha, Biomedical Engineer; Fr Joseph Waithaka; Prof Symon Guthua, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon; Dr Martin Kamau, OMFS; Alexander Mwangi, Prosthodontist; Sarna Krishan, Maxillofacial Surgery resident; and Dr Margaret Mwasha, Prosthodontist [Photo: Timon Abuna, WHM]

This insightful story was contributed by Willow Health Media, Kenya headed by its CEO/Editor-In-Chief Dr. Mercy Khorir.

Willow Health Media is Kenya's first independent, digital newsroom dedicated exclusively to health and science journalism. It is a nonprofit organisation where evidence meets storytelling, turning complex health issues into clear, compelling narratives. Founded in 2024, Willow was born out of a belief that an informed public is essential to achieving health equity. Like its namesake the resilient willow tree, our work is rooted, healing, and far-reaching.





PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE: A GUIDE FOR BLACK WOMEN TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING

By Houston Defender, Word in Black www.wordinblack.com

Here are five practical ways for Black women to practice self-love and boost self-esteem.



Prioritizing mental and emotional well-being is essential for a balanced and fulfilling life, especially for Black women who often face unique societal pressures and expectations. Embracing natural beauty, setting healthy boundaries, cultivating a supportive community, investing in personal growth, and engaging in self-care practices can help boost self-esteem and enhance overall well-being and happiness. Self-love is not a destination but an ongoing process that requires intentional effort and commitment.

Self-love and maintaining self-esteem can be challenging, especially for Black women who often face unique societal pressures and expectations. Prioritizing mental and emotional well-being is essential for a balanced and fulfilling life. Here are five practical ways to practice self-love and boost self-esteem tailored specifically for Black women.



1. Embrace Your Natural Beauty

One of the most empowering steps towards self-love is embracing your natural beauty. This includes accepting and celebrating your unique physical features, skin tone, and hair texture. Here's how you can do it:

- Ditch the Eurocentric Beauty Standards: Understand that beauty comes in all shapes, sizes, and shades. Focus on what makes you unique rather than trying to conform to societal standards that may not represent your true self.
- Care for Your Hair and Skin: Invest time in finding hair and skincare routines that work for you. Celebrate your curls, coils, and kinks, and use products that enhance your natural beauty.

- Positive Affirmations: Start your day with positive affirmations about your appearance and capabilities. Remind yourself that you are beautiful, worthy, and enough.

2. Set Healthy Boundaries

Setting healthy boundaries is crucial for protecting your mental and emotional well-being. It involves recognizing your limits and communicating them effectively to others.

- Learn to Say No: Understand that it's okay to say no to things that don't serve your interests or well-being. Prioritize your needs without feeling guilty.
- Communicate Clearly: Be assertive in expressing your boundaries to friends, family, and colleagues. Clear

communication helps others understand your limits and respect them.

- **Self-Respect:** Setting boundaries is a form of self-respect. It shows that you value your time, energy, and well-being enough to protect them from being depleted by others.

3. Cultivate a Supportive Community

Surrounding yourself with a supportive community is vital for your self-esteem and overall happiness. Seek out relationships that uplift and inspire you.

- **Find Like-Minded Women:** Join groups or organizations that align with your interests and values. Connecting with other Black women who share similar experiences can be incredibly affirming.
- **Seek Mentorship:** Look for mentors who can provide guidance, support, and encouragement. A mentor can help you navigate challenges and celebrate your achievements.
- **Engage in Open Conversations:** Create spaces where you can have honest and open conversations about your experiences, struggles, and triumphs. Sharing your story can be therapeutic and empowering.

4. Invest in Personal Growth

Personal growth is a lifelong journey that involves continuously seeking ways to improve yourself and your life. Investing in personal growth can significantly boost your self-esteem.

- **Pursue Education and Skills:** Enroll in courses or workshops that interest you. Learning new skills or gaining knowledge can increase your confidence and open new opportunities.
- **Set and Achieve Goals:** Set realistic and achievable goals for yourself. Celebrate your progress and accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem.
- **Practice Self-Reflection:** Regularly take time to reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Self-reflection helps you understand yourself better and fosters personal growth.

5. Engage in Self-Care Practices

Self-care is about taking deliberate actions to care for your mental, emotional, and physical health. It's an essential part of self-love.

- **Physical Self-Care:** Exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet, and get enough sleep. Physical health is closely linked to mental well-being.
- **Mental Self-Care:** Engage in activities that stimulate your mind, such as reading, puzzles, or learning a new hobby. Practice mindfulness and meditation to reduce stress and improve mental clarity.
- **Emotional Self-Care:** Allow yourself to feel and express your emotions. Journaling, talking to a trusted friend, or seeking therapy can help you process your feelings.

Practicing self-love and boosting self-esteem is a journey that requires intentional effort and commitment. By embracing your natural beauty, setting healthy boundaries, cultivating a supportive community, investing in personal growth, and engaging in self-care practices, Black women can empower themselves and lead more fulfilling lives. Remember, self-love is not a destination but an ongoing process that enhances your overall well-being and happiness.

Source: *Houston Defender*, *Word in Black* www.wordinblack.com

EMPOWERING BLACK MEN OVER 50: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO COMBAT COMMON HEALTH CHALLENGES

By Dr. David Samadi

As Black men age, specific health concerns start to pop up on the radar more often than others. A recent AARP study highlights four of these top concerns—high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and heart disease—that tend to worry Black men over 50. And there's good reason to take them seriously, as these health disparities are rooted in genetic and societal factors.

While some of these risks are outside our control, we can take plenty of proactive steps to help protect ourselves. Here's a straightforward look at these health issues and practical ways to stay on top.

1. Watch Your Sodium Intake

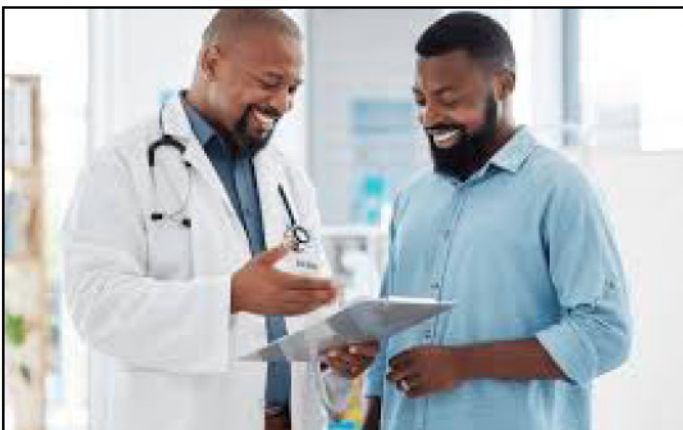
High blood pressure (or hypertension) affects Black adults at higher rates than White adults, and managing sodium intake can make a big difference. Many of us get more than double the recommended daily sodium, mostly from packaged and restaurant foods rather than the salt shaker. Cutting down by even 1,000 mg daily—equivalent to a tablespoon of soy sauce or about 3 ounces of deli meat—can help lower blood pressure.

2. Regularly Track Your Blood Pressure

Monitoring blood pressure can be easy and inexpensive. If you know you have high blood pressure (over 130/80 mm Hg), consider getting a home blood pressure monitor (around \$20) or stop by a pharmacy offering free readings. When you know your numbers, this guides you in avoiding complications like heart attacks, strokes, and kidney disease.

3. Move Your Body

Regular physical activity has many benefits, from lowering the risk of heart disease and diabetes to easing arthritis pain. This doesn't mean you need a gym membership or a fancy treadmill—a brisk walk, a bike ride, or some at-home exercises can work just as well. The CDC strongly suggests to engage in 150 minutes of moderate activity per week, but less than a quarter of older Black men meet this goal. Even small changes to stay active make a difference.



4. **Build a Strong Relationship with Your Doctor**

A trusted healthcare provider can make all the difference, especially if you have a regular doctor who knows your history and health concerns. Annual checkups help you stay up-to-date on screenings for high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer. If you don't have a regular doctor, consider finding one who understands your background and health goals. Strong relationships with healthcare providers lead to better, more personalized care.

5. **Be an Active Participant in Your Care**

When you're with your doctor, ask questions about diet, weight, and any routine screenings you may need. Some critical questions could be, "Do I need any blood work?" or "What can I do to improve my cholesterol?" Engaging in these conversations shows you're serious about your health and want to live a long, disease-free life.

6. **Keep Your Family in the Loop**

Your family's health history can shed light on your risk factors. If you know that high blood pressure or diabetes runs in your family, that's more reason to stay on top of these health concerns. Talking about health history with loved ones can help everyone stay informed and proactive.

7. **Make a Plan to Quit Smoking**

If you smoke, know that quitting is one of the best things you can do for your health. Smoking can result in serious health conditions, from cancer to heart disease. Talk to your doctor for support—they can help you explore tools and resources to quit.

Final thoughts

By taking these steps, you can take control of your health, even when dealing with challenges that feel out of reach. Small lifestyle changes can reduce the impact of these health issues and help protect your well-being as you age.

Dr. David Samadi is the Director of Men's Health and Urologic Oncology at St. Francis Hospital in Long Island. He's a renowned and highly successful board certified Urologic Oncologist Expert and Robotic Surgeon in New York City, regarded as one of the leading prostate surgeons in the U.S., with a vast expertise in prostate cancer treatment and Robotic-Assisted Laparoscopic Prostatectomy. He is also the author of two books, *Prostate Cancer Now What? A Practical Guide to Diagnosis, Treatment, and Recovery* and *The Ultimate MANUAL, Dr. Samadi's Guide to Men's Health and Wellness*.

ANGÉLIQUE KIDJO – “QUEEN OF AFRICAN MUSIC”

From Law... to Global Music Icon, Philanthropist and Activist

Five-time Grammy Award winner Angélique Kidjo is one of the greatest artists in international music today, a creative force with eighteen albums to her name.

Angélique Kidjo (full name: Angélique Kpasseloko Hinto Hounsinou Kandjo Manta Zogbin Kidjo) is a Beninese musician, actress, and activist. Angélique Kidjo has won five Grammy Awards and a Polar Music Prize. She has collaborated with popular and renowned artists including: Alicia Keys, Davido, Ayra Starr, Stoneboy, Peter Gabriel, John Legend, Philip Glass, Bono, Yo-Yo Ma, and Burna Boy. She is the first Black African artist to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. She also performed at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony on July 23, 2021.

In 2021, Time magazine included her in its list of the 100 most influential people in the world. Angélique Kidjo is fluent in five languages: Fon, French, Yorùbá, Gen (Mina) and English. She sings in all of them, and she also has her own personal language, which includes words that serve as song titles such as “Batonga”. Kidjo often uses Benin’s traditional Zilin vocal technique and vocalese.

A Remarkable Story

Since Angélique Kidjo first burst



onto the global scene over four decades ago, her music has provided a powerful transmission of pure unfettered joy. In the last few years alone, the Africa-born artist has amassed a host of accolades proving her immense cultural impact, including winning the 2023 Polar Music Prize, landing on Time’s illustrious 100 Most Influential People list, and taking home a Grammy for Best Global Music Album for 2021’s *Mother Nature* (a feat that earned her Guinness World Record for most Global Music Album awards won at the Grammys, with five prizes to date). On *HOPE!!*, Kidjo offers up a revelatory body of work affirming her as a truly essential artist—one whose unbridled joy serves as a unifying force, a conduit for healing, and a much-needed antidote to despair in troubled times.

“I started singing when I was six years old, and I’m grateful every day that I still get to live my passion and do what I love with my life,” says Kidjo, who hails from the West African nation of Benin. “With this album I wanted to put some fire back in people’s hearts, and show how much we need that joy and hope to keep our humanity going.”

The 18th album in her widely acclaimed discography, *HOPE!!* pushes forward with the generation-spanning collaborative approach Kidjo previously embraced on *Mother Nature*—an album that featured a stacked lineup of young artists from genres like Afrobeats, dancehall, and hip-hop.

Dedicated to Angélique Kidjo’s late mother, *HOPE!!* emerged from a period shaped by grief and renewal. “My mother used to tell me that hope is the bedrock of our existence,” says Angélique.

As the latest offering in a catalog that’s continually shown the transformative power of music, *HOPE!!* solidifies Angélique Kidjo’s legacy as a visionary artist whose sense of purpose has only grown stronger over

time. Kidjo also advocates on behalf of children as a UNICEF Ambassador, and has created her own charitable foundation, Batonga, dedicated to support the education of young girls in Africa.

Angélique Kidjo was born in Ouidah, French Dahomey, in what became Benin. Her father is from the Fon people of Ouidah and her mother from the Yoruba people. Her father was a musician, and her mother worked as a choreographer and theatre director. She grew up listening to Yoruba and Beninese traditional music, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, James Brown, Manu Dibango, Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, Fela Kuti, Stevie Wonder, Osibisa and Santana. By the time she was six years old, Kidjo was performing with her mother's theatre troupe.

She started singing in her school band, Les Sphinx, and found success as a teenager with her adaptation of Miriam Makeba's "Les Trois Z", which was played on national radio. Kidjo recorded the album 'Pretty' with Cameroonian producer Ekambi Brilliant and her brother Oscar. It featured the songs "Ninive", "Gbe Agossi", and a tribute to the singer Bella Bellow, one of her role models. The success of the album allowed her to tour all over West Africa. Continuing political conflicts in Benin prevented her from being an independent artist in her own country and led her to relocate to Paris in 1983.

After moving to France, Angélique initially planned to become a human rights lawyer, but ended up studying music. While working various day jobs to pay for her tuition, she studied music at the CIM, a jazz school in Paris, where she met musician and producer Jean Hebrail, with whom she has composed most of her music and whom she married in 1987. She started out as a backup singer in local bands. In 1985, she became the front singer of Jasper van't Hof's

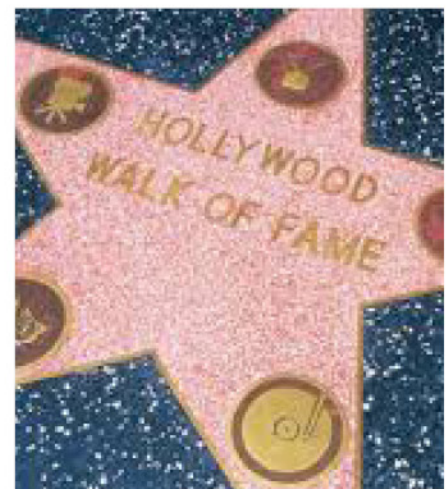
Euro-African jazz/rock band Pili Pili. Three Pili Pili studio albums followed: 'Jakko' (1987), 'Be In Two Minds' (1988, produced by Marlon Klein) and 'Hotel Babo' (1990). By the end of the 1980s, she had become one of the most popular live performers in Paris and recorded a solo album called Parakou for the Open Jazz Label. She met Island Records founder Chris Blackwell in Paris; Blackwell signed her to a record deal in 1991. She recorded four albums for Island until Blackwell's departure from the label. In 2000, she was signed in New York by Columbia Records, for whom she recorded two albums.

In 2006, Angélique Kidjo founded the Batonga Foundation with the stated goal of empowering and educating adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa. Kidjo invented the word "Batonga" as a child as a response to those who told her that girls did not belong in the classroom. Later, it would become the title of a hit song for her. The foundation has provided girls in five African countries (Mali, Benin, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Cameroon) with scholarships and in-kind support, supplied 8,727 students access to wells and latrines across seven schools in Benin, and offered 222,000 students in Benin's poorest regions Toms Shoes for the walk to school.[citation needed] In 2015 and 2016, Batonga began to focus on education programs aimed at excluded young women and girls, providing girls with safe spaces and mentors, equipping them with life and financial literacy skills, and helping them start small businesses.

Angélique Kidjo got married to French musician and producer Jean Hébrail in 1987. Their daughter Naima was born in 1993 in France.

Angélique has received honorary doctorates from Yale University, Berklee College of Music, Middlebury College, and UCLouvain. In 2010, the BBC Focus on Africa magazine in-

cluded Kidjo in its list of the African continent's 50 most iconic figures, based on reader votes, and in 2020 she was on the list of the BBC's 100 Women.





THE RISE OF SHATTA WALE: KING OF THE STREETS, KING OF DANCEHALL

From rejected Stone... To King, Global Dancehall Music Sensation and Entrepreneur

The rise of Shatta Wale, born Charles Nii Armah Mensah Jr., is a story of resilience, rebranding, and a strategic connection to the streets, transforming him from a forgotten artist into one of Africa's biggest dancehall acts. His journey is defined by a 10-year hiatus, a controversial comeback, and unwavering self-belief.

Charles Nii Armah Mensah Jr., (born 17 October 1984) known by his stage name 'Shatta Wale' was formerly known as 'Bandana'. Shatta Wale is a Ghanaian reggae-dancehall artist from Accra, Ghana. He started with stage name "Bandana" after senior high school and released the hit track "Bandana from Ghana". The

song made tremendous airwaves in the Ghanaian music industry in 2004. Shatta Wale's sudden rise to the occasion happened in 2013 VGMA awards when he threw lyrical insults to VGMA now Telecel Ghana Music Awards (TGMA), because he proclaimed they robbed him of the Dancehall artist of the year to a female Dancehall artist Kaakie. Even though the song had vulgar lyrics, it was so anticipated by the media which created his musical breakthrough.

His greatest song hit in 2013, "Dancehall King," took the airwaves by surprise. Shatta Wale's musical revenue is mostly generated through hosting shows, which attract thousands of Ghanaian youths.

His best-known singles are "Dancehall King", "My Level" and "Taking Over". He is also known for "Already" from Beyoncé's The Lion King: The Gift, which also featured Major Lazer. His song "Dancehall King" earned him the Artiste of the Year at the 2014 edition of the Vodafone Ghana Music Awards. Wale is also an actor who appeared in the films Never Say Never, The trial of Shatta Wale and Shattered Lives. Wale's 2004 recording "Moko Hoo" was nominated for a Ghana Music Award.

In 2014, he peaked to number 38 on ETV's "Top 100 Most Influential Ghanaian" Awards chart. He has since then appeared on the chart every year. He was ranked "Most Influential Musician" on social media in 2017. He made a record-setting as a dancehall artist to have won 11 awards at the 2019 3 Music Awards ceremony.

Early Beginnings and Failure (As "Bandana")

He started his career in the early 2000s under the stage name

"Bandana." In 2004, he gained initial success with the hit song "Bandana from Ghana" (Moko Hoo) featuring Tinny. Following his debut, his career stalled. He struggled to gain further recognition and vanished from the limelight for nearly a decade, with many in the music industry writing him off.

During this period of, in his words, being ignored and sidelined by the industry, he decided to stop recording and instead spent years studying music production, mastering software like Cubase, and developing his unique sound.

His Rebirth and Controversy

He rebranded himself as "Shatta Wale," a name derived from his new persona—"Shatta" meaning gangster in Jamaican slang and "Wale" standing for World Alerted Lyrical Entertainer. His resurgence began at the 2013 Ghana Music Awards (VGMA), where he was angry about losing a category and initiated a public feud, releasing controversial, harsh, and often vulgar lyrics aimed at the organizers and other artists, which quickly grabbed the nation's attention.

Capitalizing on this attention, he released "Dancehall King" in 2013. The song became a massive hit,



validating his rebrand and propelling him back to the top of the Ghanaian music scene.

Building the “Shatta Movement”

Unlike many artists who relied on traditional media, Shatta Wale focused on building a direct, cult-like relationship with the streets of Accra, particularly Nima. He proved his longevity by releasing a relentless stream of hits, often producing, mixing, and mastering his own songs.

In 2019, his star rose higher when he featured on Beyoncé’s *“The Lion King: The Gift”* album for the song *“Already,”* cementing his status on the international stage.

Today, he is known for hosting massive concerts, such as the *“Faith Concert”* during the COVID-19 pandemic, and he boasts millions of fans known as the *“Shatta Movement”*

His Birth, Early Childhood and Career Journey

Charles Nii Armah Mensah Jr. was born in Korle Gonno from Accra, Ghana at the Police Hospital on 17 October 1984 to Charles Nii Armah Mensah Snr and Elsie Evelyn Avemegah. His father is a politician, businessman and legal practitioner.

Shatta Wale attended Seven Great Princes Academy at Dansoman, a suburb in Accra, where he demonstrated an affinity for arts and acted in a popular drama series, *By the Fireside*, at the National Theatre of Ghana. He then continued to the Winneba Secondary School where he obtained his second cycle education. At the start of career, Shatta Wale used to be called an alias *‘Doggy’*.

In 2019 he had a collaboration with Beyoncé titled *“Already”* on her album *The Lion King: The Gift* which

was nominated at the Grammy Awards. In 2021, he was nominated for two awards and won the *‘Best Virtual Entertainer of the Year’* Award at the International Reggae and World Music Awards (IRAWMA).

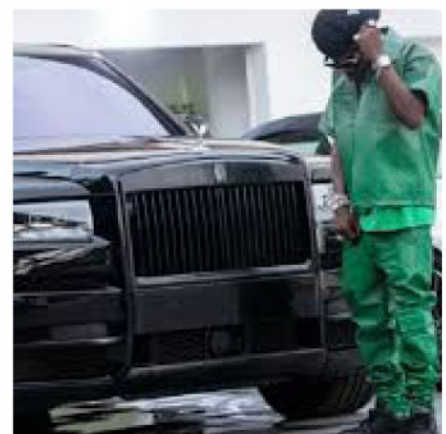
Shatta Wale released a song in January 2024 titled *“Balloon”*, with an accompanying video. He also performed at Vybzs Kartel’s Freedom Street concert in Jamaica.

On April 10, 2025, Shatta Wale hosted Nigerian TikTok influencer Peller at his mansion in Ghana, sparking viral online attention through their collaborative videos and promotional appearances, particularly in connection with *“SHAXI”*, his ride-hailing company.

He was the first Ghanaian to organize a digital concert on YouTube which was dubbed the Faith Concert. The concert was organized to bring hope to Ghanaians and his global audience at large during the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. He was selected by The Ministry of Communications, Ghana, alongside Highlife musician Kuami Eugene as the headline artistes for the COVID-19 app virtual launch concert held on Monday April 13, 2020. On Saturday 17 October 2020, he threw a massive birthday party, which saw attendance by family and friends at his East Legon (a high-rise suburb in Accra, Ghana) residence to mark his 36th birthday.

His journey from being a *“rejected stone”* in 2004 to a multi-award-winning superstar is widely cited in Ghana as a story of grit and refusing to let others define his failure.

Additional Source: Wikipedia



FIFA INTRODUCES TWO NEW RED-CARD RULES AT WORLD CUP FOR PLAYERS WHO COVER THEIR MOUTHS WHEN SPEAKING TO OPPONENTS

The Rules for showing red cards to players at the World Cup have recently been updated because of two controversies in international football this year.

Gianni Infantino, the President of world football organizing body FIFA, pushed for changes after Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni tried to hide verbal insults toward Real Madrid star Vinícius Júnior in a Champions League game and Senegal's team walked off the field to protest a referee's decision in a heated and chaotic Africa Cup of Nations final.

Football's rule making panel, the International Football Association Board (IFAB), has agreed that players can be penalized with a red card if they cover their mouths when verbally confronting another player.

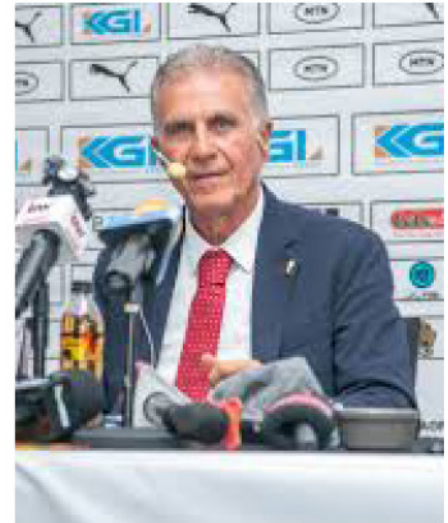
The rule is not mandatory within The Laws of the Game but gives competition organizers like FIFA the option to use it. It was unanimously approved by IFAB officials from FIFA and the four British football federations at a special meeting recently in Vancouver, Canada, ahead of the FIFA Congress.

FIFA's proposal followed Vinícius, backed by Real Madrid teammate Kylian Mbappé, accusing Prestianni of making a racially charged insult while raising his jersey to cover his mouth during the game in February.

UEFA handed Prestianni a six-game ban — three of the games deferred for a probationary period — for the verbal abuse, which it said was homophobic. UEFA could not prove the racial insult which Prestianni denied, though he admitted using a homophobic slur.

If Prestianni is selected for Argentina's World Cup squad, he must sit out the defending champion's first two matches in June, although the ban can be appealed.

"At the discretion of the competition organizer, any player covering their mouth in a confrontational situation with an opponent may be sanctioned with a red card," IFAB said.



FORMER REAL MADRID HEAD COACH, CARLOS QUEIROZ APPOINTED AS BLACK STARS HEAD COACH AHEAD OF 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP AMIDST GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Carlos Queiroz has recently been appointed the Head Coach for Ghana's National Team, The Black Stars.

The former Real Madrid, Manchester United, Portugal, and Iran coach will lead Ghana's campaign at the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

A statement from Ghana's Football Association (GFA) stated *"The Executive Council of the Ghana*

Football Association working with all key stakeholders, has appointed Carlos Queiroz as head coach of the senior national team, the Black Stars."

Queiroz boasts an extensive World Cup pedigree. He led South Africa to qualification for the 2002 FIFA World Cup, guided Portugal to the knockout phase in 2010, and took charge of Iran at both the 2014 and 2018 tournaments. He has also held coaching roles in Egypt, Oman, Japan, and Qatar, and is expected to bring his wealth of experience to bear during the World Cup.

Coach Queiroz has begun immediately to prepare the Black Stars for the tournament, which kicks off in June 11, 2026.

Ghana is scheduled to play its first group match against Panama on June 17, 2026, in Toronto, Canada before facing England and Croatia in the other Group matches.

Following his appointment in April 2026, Portuguese tactician Carlos Queiroz took over as head coach of the Ghana Black Stars on a short-term contract, with an aim to stabilize the team ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The 73-year-old was appointed following the dismissal of Otto Addo (Ghana's Immediate Past Coach), bringing extensive international experience to lead Ghana against Panama, England, and Croatia in their challenging group.

Ghanaians' Expectations for Carlos Queiroz

The expectations of Ghana's football community are high, yet mixed with caution from football administrators and fans: Queiroz himself stated that in modern football, the minimum expectation is to win, describing himself as a *"winning coach"* focused on results.

Ghanaians expect the team to be

highly organized and disciplined, moving away from the inconsistency and perceived indiscipline of previous, failed regimes. With Queiroz bringing in and enforcing discipline and proper structure, there is a great possibility of achieving great wins for the Black Stars.

After many failures and disappointments from previous coaches, Fans are looking for a turnaround in the team's performance, expecting him to bring his experience from coaching top sides like Real Madrid and Iran to make an impact in the World Cup. There is heightened expectation that he will select the best players based on merit, including from the local league, and that the national team will not be a place for favorites. However, some stakeholders including former Ghana FA official Fred Pappoe, have urged fans to be realistic, considering his short tenure and the high-profile opponents in their World Cup group.

How Queiroz is Handling Expectations

Queiroz has approached the "toughest challenge" of his career with a direct, "hardline" approach. He has demanded "absolute focus, maximum discipline, and total sacrifice" from the players, warning against complacency – a 'cracking the whip approach'. He issued a "40 days to honour the pride, passion, and dreams of Ghana" call, urging the nation to rally behind the team.

Carlos Queiroz has already begun engaging in a rigorous scouting and monitoring process, analyzing 170 matches and assessing 75 players, including 30 in person. Emphasizing Structure over Hype, Queiroz has vowed to prioritize team structure and resilience, emphasizing that *"greatness is built through experience, preparation, and belief"*. And he has already begun assessing

local players for the World Cup squad, indicating a desire to broaden the talent pool

As of early May 2026, Queiroz is scheduled to lead the team into friendlies against Mexico and Wales before the June 17 opener against Panama.

Additional Source: Ghana Football Association



FROM THE GROUND UP: ADJAYE ASSOCIATES' VISION FOR A NEW AFRICAN ARCHITECTURE

Last month Adjaye Associates opened the doors of their new studio in Accra with a design driven by context and climate. The moment marked a significant expansion of the practice's presence in Ghana and across West Africa. Designed by Sir David Adjaye, the new headquarters building establishes a permanent base for globally recognised practice.

Located in Cantonments, the four-storey building reflects a long-term commitment to Ghana's architectural and creative future. Constructed using rammed earth and low-carbon concrete, the structure combines contemporary engineering with local materials and environmental strategies, creating a building that is both an exemplary workplace and a showcase for the firm's commitment to creating an architectural language rooted in region. A dramatic finned facade and 26-meter cantilever define the building architecturally, while internally the spaces are designed around light, openness and collaboration.

The new studio adds to a strong body of work across the continent. The recently completed Bank Square in Accra is a seven-structure complex designed for the Bank of Ghana and is currently the tallest building in the country at 100 metres, demonstrating the practice's capacity to operate at civic scale. In Kenya, the Kaloki Nyamai artist studio signals a different register, for intimate spaces that respond to the wooded landscape of Karen in Nairobi and the artistic production style of the artist. On the horizon, two significant projects are poised to start on site in the coming months – The Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library in Johannesburg and the International Children's Cancer Research Centre in Kyebi, Ghana are two buildings that speak to the breadth of ambition that defines the practice across the continent.

Adjaye Associates' new Accra home also reflects a broader rethinking of workplace architecture. It is designed to support parents, particularly women, in their return to work after having children. The building includes a fully subsidised creche, making it the first architectural practice in the region to offer this progressive benefit. The creche is led by an early-years teacher, enabling parents to remain closely connected to their young families during the working day. Lunches prepared by local food businesses are provided for all staff and served on the custom-designed communal table in the gardens. Coming together midway through the day is part of the studio's rhythm, encouraging exchange and connection across teams and disciplines.

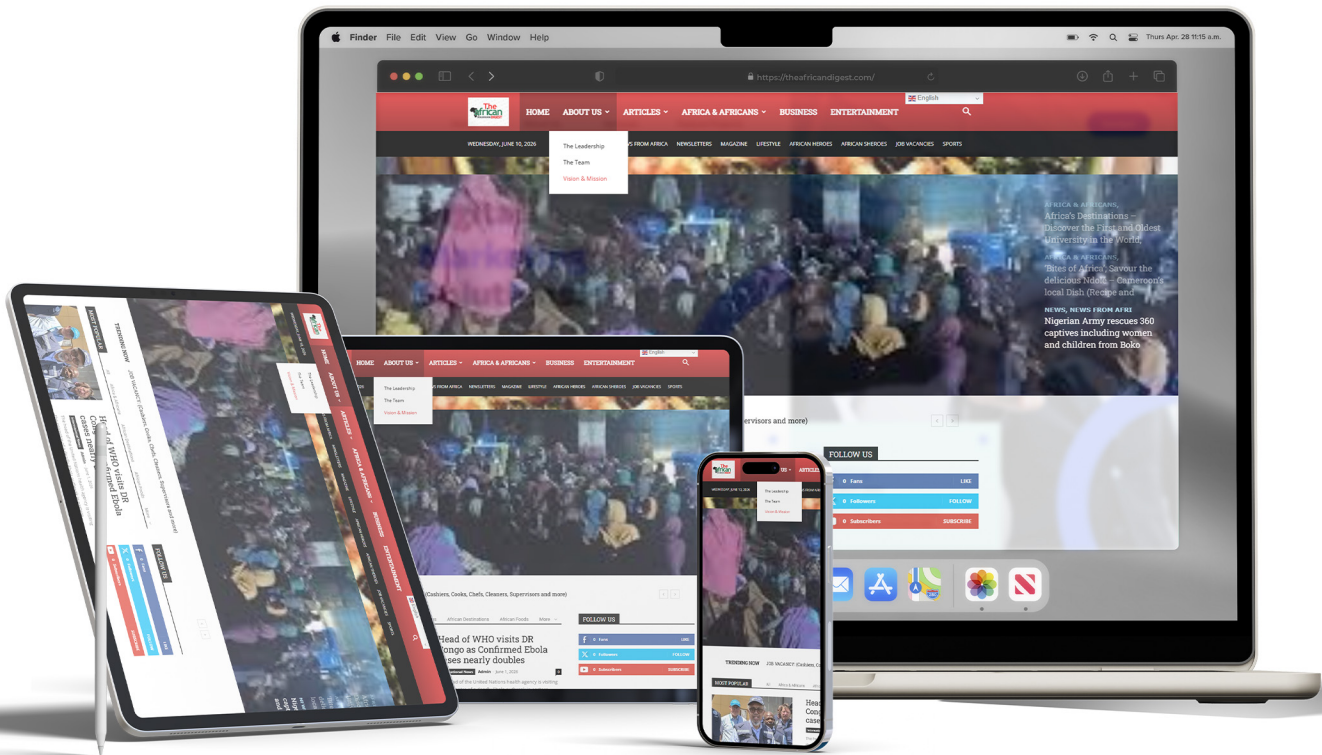
Adjaye Associates has continued to invest in professional development and mentorship through initiatives such as the Leadership Academy, specifically tuned to support the growth of emerging architectural talent in the region. The new studio is set up to function as both a workplace and a platform for collaboration, learning and cultural exchange. On the ground floor, a gallery and lecture space is being prepared for events which, when its public programme begins later this year, will help bridge the gulf between the public and architecture.

For a practice whose work spans Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and Asia, the decision to deepen its roots in Accra carries particular significance. Building a lasting piece of infrastructure for architectural practice is a commitment to the future and self-reliance of creative production in West Africa at a time when urban growth has the potential to transform the continent.





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