

VANTAGE

JULY/MAIDEN EDITION

PERSPECTIVE. CULTURE. IDENTITY.

FROM GRIEF TO INNOVATION

Cancer Compass
Onyinyechukwu
Gift Ositadimma

A new voice in cancer
research and the future
of healthcare

**THE FLUID BORDERS OF
THE BEAUTIFUL GAME**

Culture. Identity. Unity.

**THE ARCHITECT
OF CONNECTION**
BAMBAD

**FAITH,
PURPOSE &
STRATEGY**

OLA LAING
Building impact
with intention

A NEW CHAPTER FOR DIASPORA STORYTELLING

By Victor Ikoli, Founder & Editor-in-Chief, Vantage Magazine



Across the UK, something remarkable is taking shape. It may not always make the headlines, but it is impossible to ignore. The African diaspora is building businesses, creating opportunities, celebrating excellence and reshaping communities with confidence and purpose.

Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of witnessing that transformation firsthand.

From the inspiring celebration of achievement at Afriball to the entrepreneurial energy of BizWomen Market Day, and with the Afroluxe Trade Fair continuing that momentum in the North East, one message has been unmistakable: this is a community no longer waiting to be recognised. It is creating its own platforms, investing in its own future and defining success on its own terms.

Along the way, I have met founders, creatives, professionals and community leaders whose journeys speak not only of resilience but of ambition, innovation and leadership. Their stories deserve more than passing attention. They deserve to be documented with care and told with authority.

That conviction inspired the launch of **Vantage Magazine**.

After more than a decade in journalism, including thirteen years in Qatar, I came to the UK believing there was space for a publication that would do more than report on the diaspora. It would celebrate achievement, explore ideas, examine challenges and chronicle a community shaping Britain's social, cultural and economic landscape.

Vantage exists to amplify voices, celebrate excellence and provide thoughtful journalism that reflects the richness and diversity of African diaspora life. We believe our stories should be told with depth, integrity and purpose not as occasional headlines, but as part of the historical record.

This first issue marks the beginning of that journey.

Thank you for joining us as readers, contributors and partners. Together, we will tell the stories that matter, celebrate the people driving change and create a publication worthy of the community it serves.

Welcome to **Vantage Magazine**.

Welcome to a new perspective.

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PUBLICATION NOTE

Vantage Magazine is an independent publication celebrating the achievements, stories, and voices of the African diaspora across the United Kingdom and beyond.

FROM GRIEF TO INNOVATION

How a personal loss inspired a tech pioneer to build an AI lifeline for cancer patients across the UK.

The most enduring innovations are rarely born from a boardroom; they emerge from the sharp reality of personal loss. For many, grief is a static experience, a heavy space where time slows down. But for those driven by a natural instinct to solve problems, it can become a powerful catalyst for change.

When Onyinyechukwu Gift Ositadinma faced the loss of her grandfather to prostate cancer, followed by watching her grandmother silently manage a hereditary illness for years, she experienced a profound shift. It was a confrontation with the limits of human control. Yet, rather than letting that grief settle into a permanent state of helplessness, the tech pioneer chose to build a way through it.

The result is Cancer Compass UK, and at its core sits Oyim: an AI health companion designed specifically for those who find it difficult to voice

their fears out loud.

"I have never been someone who dwells on problems," Ositadinma said.

"I have always looked for what can be done, even in the most difficult situations. There is a philosophy that has shaped how I view pain: nothing is completely bad; even a dead clock tells the right time twice a day. Difficult moments carry something useful, even when it doesn't feel that way at the time."

Oyim was built as a direct response to that philosophy. Recognising that many individuals facing an overwhelming cancer diagnosis prefer not to burden others or struggle to articulate their emotions to another person, Ositadinma designed the AI companion to provide a continuous, judgment-free space. It is a presence built for those who have much to say but require a pressure-free environment to process it.



"Instead of staying in the grief, I asked myself what I could build from it."

The discipline required to launch Cancer Compass UK was cultivated long before Ositadinma arrived in the UK. Much of her operational blueprint stems from her time leading Wealth Makers in Nigeria, a formative period that shaped her approach to both business and community engagement.

"Everything I am as a builder, I can trace back to that season," she noted.

The first key lesson was the absolute necessity of community integration. Wealth Makers demonstrated that sustainable success is measured by the value created for those around you. It required a willingness to listen, accept feedback, and iterate. To ensure Cancer Compass UK met authentic needs, Ositadinma conducted extensive primary research, listening to the lived experiences of cancer survivors, patients, and their families.



The decision to pursue an MSc in IT Project Management was a deliberate alignment of natural aptitude and academic discipline. Historically, Ositadinma had always been the analytical anchor within her family and peer circles, the person capable of separating an individual from a problem, and the problem from the conditions that created it.

"I have managed projects and events throughout my life, long before formalising it academically," she explains. "I chose IT Project Management because I wanted to operate at the exact intersection of human challenges and technological solutions. Technology reshapes industries and human behaviour, and that is where I feel most alive intellectually."

Arriving without a deeply technical background did not deter her. She recognises that leadership within tech demands clarity, curiosity, and systemic thinking rather than just line-by-line coding expertise.

Academic rigour provided the formal language and structural frameworks covering risk

The second lesson was resilience. Graduating at the top of her postgraduate cohort with a Distinction, Ositadinma refused to let her research remain theoretical. "Resilience isn't always dramatic," she reflects. "Sometimes it is just choosing, day after day, to keep going when it would be far easier to stop."

Finally, that period instilled a deep commitment to structured personal development. Influenced by the teachings of figures like Jim Rohn, Bob Proctor, and David Imonitie, Ositadinma developed a rigorous framework for patience, analytical thinking, and execution.

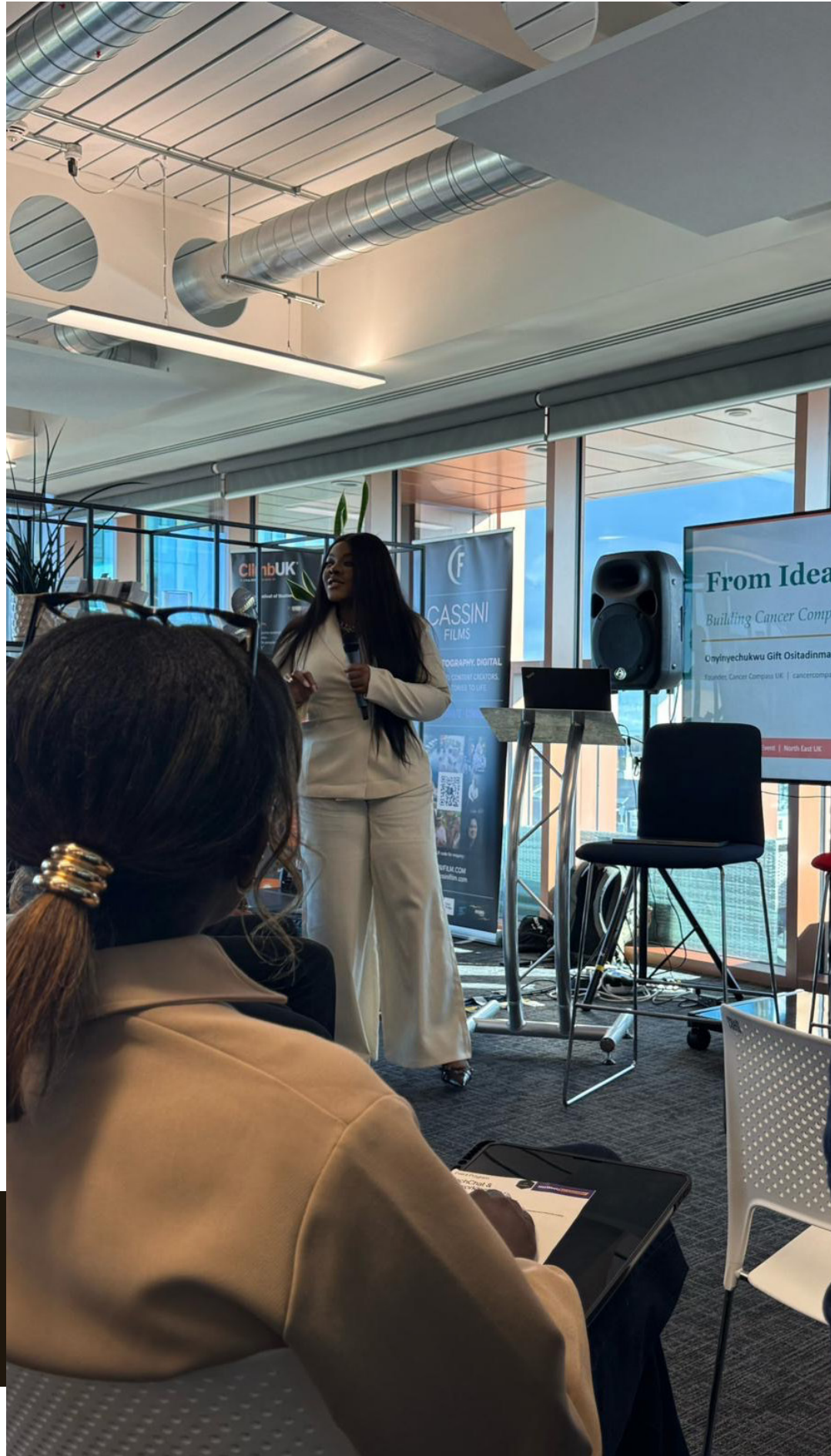
"Confidence without action is just a feeling. This platform is the proof of action."



management, stakeholder engagement, and quality assurance that she now applies daily to the scaling of Cancer Compass UK. Whether constructing a business case for prospective NHS partnerships or managing competing development priorities, the academic training serves as a practical toolkit.

Yet, Ositadinma maintains a grounded perspective on corporate and academic accolades. While her First-Class Distinction stands as a testament to her work ethic, she is fully aware that a grade on a transcript does not build a company. The true value lies in execution. By merging structured methodologies with a deeply personal mission, she has transformed a period of profound family grief into a scalable digital sanctuary for those navigating the realities of cancer.

Concluding with advice for young African women in tech, Ositadinma encourages acting immediately, cultivating self-belief, and investing in personal growth. She also advises building a supportive network and embracing one's heritage as an asset rather than a limitation, advocating for building one's own opportunities rather than waiting for them.



FAITH AND STRATEGY:

OLA LAING ON BUILDING BUSINESS WITH PURPOSE AND LEGACY

By Ayeni Olusegun

From navigating the challenges of fibroids to rebuilding life in a new country, Ola Laing's journey reflects that of ambition, resilience, and reinvention shared by many immigrants across Ireland and Europe. As the founder and creative director of Oconcept Holdings Limited, the multifaceted entrepreneur is focused on building a legacy that will last for generations. Her experiences across continents have shaped her outlook, strategy, resilience, leadership, and entrepreneurship. The path to entrepreneurship, however, was far from straightforward. Originally from Nigeria, Laing's professional journey took her through the Gulf, including Dubai and Qatar, experiences she emphasised were crucial to shaping her approach. "Nigeria prepared me for resilience. Dubai sharpened my work ethic, attention to detail, and standard of excellence. Qatar strengthened my ability to work across cultures, industries, and expectations," Laing tells VanTage Magazine.

Now in Ireland, Laing says those experiences have proved invaluable as a business owner. Yet, more than strategy and growth, she highlights that community and faith have become one of her greatest sources of motivation after questioning her ambitions in a new country.

"I am also learning the power of community, trust, and local relationships. People do business with people they know and trust, and I am building that connection in Waterford, across Ireland, and within the wider Nigerian diaspora," she says.

To set this up also comes with its own set of challenges. Talking about the financial challenges of starting a business, Laing disclosed that every opportunity as a new business owner is tempting to accept because one wants to grow quickly.

"I learned that not every client is right for the business. Financially, it was challenging. I started with very little, and traditional funding was not available to me at the time."



To overcome this challenge, she studied the market, made competitive offers, and focused on delivering strong value efficiently and effectively. That helped with traction locally in Waterford and beyond, while keeping quality and excellence at the core. The experiences also shaped how she now approaches clients and business strategy.

"Working across different industries has taught me that every business is trying to sell a product, a service, or trust. That distinction matters.

Today, my focus is mainly on service-based businesses, because services often require deeper positioning. A product can be seen, touched, photographed, and compared quickly. A service has to be explained, trusted, and understood before

people buy,” she explains. Those lessons also shaped the approach behind Oconcept AI Marketing Agency, one of the ventures operating under Oconcept Holdings, where Laing focuses on helping businesses connect visibility with measurable outcomes.

Having spent years leading marketing initiatives across businesses, Laing says her approach was developed through firsthand experience of what business owners need beyond branding alone.

“Oconcept AI Marketing Agency is very personal to me because I have spent years leading marketing for businesses. I understand that business owners need more than nice designs or posts. They need a system that supports their bottom line.”

She notes that this has led to a broader focus on creating integrated systems to support business growth.

“That is why we focus on building client acquisition ecosystems. From website design and SEO to brand messaging, content, ads, and conversion strategy, everything has to work together to help a business become easier to find, easier to trust, and easier to buy from.”

To support her long-term vision, Laing oversees several businesses, including Oconcept AI Marketing Agency, LifeCoachOla, and Property Document Verification, each with its own purpose and audience, but united under a broader scope.

“For me, the holding company is about structure, scale, and legacy. It allows me to build different businesses without scattering the vision,” Laing tells the Magazine.

She underlined the importance of legacy, stating it is less about symbolism and more about building sustainable foundations.

“At this stage of my journey, legacy is not something I romanticise. My focus right now is on building, structuring, and scaling the businesses properly, as I am still deeply involved in every part of the work. Legacy starts with a foundation. If the foundation is weak, the vision cannot last. My goal is to build Oconcept Holdings Limited into a company that is still relevant long after me, even 300 years from now.”

This mindset led her to launch LifeCoachOla, a platform designed to help women make informed life and relationship decisions. Having experienced these uncertainties herself, including four unsuccessful engagements before turning 35, Laing said she was eventually pushed to examine deeper patterns and beliefs.

“I had to confront my own patterns, limiting beliefs, and the way I was choosing relationships. I created a practical system for dating with clarity and discernment,” she added.



FROM PORT HARCOURT TO STATION ROAD:

THE PREGNANCY CRAVING THAT SPARKED SOUTH GOSFORTH'S NEWEST FOOD FAVOURITE

By Vantage Desk



Running an independent food business in the North East is rarely as glamorous as it appears on a beautifully curated Instagram feed. Just ask Chibuzo Vanessa Uche. Recently, she shared a humorous story with her online followers about a customer who ordered 100 meat pies and mysteriously disappeared. While the incident was frustrating and wasteful, Vanessa handled it with grace. She saw it as a valuable lesson in entrepreneurship, emphasizing the importance of managing risks, adapting to unexpected challenges, and maintaining resilience in the face of setbacks. This resilience has undoubtedly paid off. Beyond simply surviving the daily challenges of small business ownership, the brand has achieved a significant milestone by officially opening its brick-and-mortar doors to the public at Generation House on Commercial Road, conveniently located near Station Road in South Gosforth.

A Craving with a Purpose

Vanessa's business, Just Juicy Treats, didn't begin with a meticulously crafted business plan. Instead, it originated from a simple pregnancy craving. Years ago, while residing in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Vanessa found herself perpetually searching for fresh juice. The available options on the market were disappointingly limited. Observing a glaring lack of quality, she made the bold decision to create her own juice, swiftly transforming a personal need into a thriving word-of-mouth operation among her friends and family.

Later, when Vanessa relocated to the UK and settled in Newcastle, her entrepreneurial spirit resurfaced. Cooking had always been her steadfast anchor. She reveled in the profound impact a hearty, well-spiced, and delectable meal could have on people. It had the power to provide comfort, spark meaningful conversations, and instantly evoke a sense of home.

The Taste of Nigeria

In her new community in the North East, she noticed that many fellow Nigerian expats were deeply missing the authentic flavors of their homeland. She understood that many people were seeking that same connection to home, yearning for the familiar snacks they grew up with. This realisation inspired her to create the pastry side of her business, specifically the heavily filled, golden meat pies that have become her signature product.

For a long time, Just Juicy operated behind closed doors, building a fiercely loyal community through deliveries and pop-ups. Now, local food lovers

can experience Just Juicy firsthand at its brand-new South Gosforth location, conveniently situated just a short walk from the South Gosforth Metro station. The expanded counter features a rotating menu of authentic snacks, including her popular meat pies, chicken pies, puff-puff, and delicious Nigerian egg rolls.

Cooking with Intention

Vanessa, a passionate chef, refuses to compromise on quality in her new kitchen. Every dish is meticulously crafted, using fresh, homemade ingredients. Her day begins before the rest of Newcastle wakes up, as she thoughtfully chops, marinates, and layers flavours to ensure each portion is perfect. Her Nigerian heritage is woven into every menu item, infusing bold seasonings and traditional hospitality into a diverse North East customer base.

Running a kitchen is physically demanding, but Vanessa finds immense satisfaction in seeing the local community savor her creations.

Just Juicy's success is largely attributed to the power of word-of-mouth. Looking ahead, Vanessa has ambitious plans to increase production capacity and eventually bring her products to retail shelves

nationwide. She is also working on introducing her original freshly pressed cold juices to the UK market, completing her culinary journey right here in South Gosforth.

For anyone else standing on the edge of starting their own venture, her advice remains straightforward. "Start small. Stay consistent. Follow your passion."

Every pie that leaves her new counter tells that exact story—one built on stubborn determination, local community, and the simple desire to make people feel at home, one bite at a time.



THE JUST JUICY PANTRY

Three authentic treats to try on your first visit to the South Gosforth shop:

1. The Signature Meat Pie Flaky, shortcrust pastry packed tight with perfectly seasoned minced beef, potatoes, and carrots.
2. Puff-Puff A beloved Nigerian street food staple—fluffy, sweet, and golden-fried dough balls that melt in your mouth.
3. Nigerian Egg Rolls A whole hard-boiled egg wrapped neatly in a sweet, spiced pastry dough and fried to a crisp perfection.



THE ARCHITECT OF CONNECTION

How Bambad is redefining diaspora entrepreneurship, empowering communities, and shaping the future of African hospitality in the UK.

By Victor Ikoli

The drive to succeed often originates from a simple desire: to be seen. For Olabamidele Ridwon Badmos, known professionally and across his networks as Bambad, that motivation developed early in Ibadan, Nigeria. Growing up in a busy blended family and navigating classrooms where only select students received attention, he quickly learned what it felt like to be overlooked. While the outside world viewed him as ordinary, he harboured a quiet determination to prove otherwise.

That internal drive has since fueled one of the UK's most compelling diaspora success stories. Today, Bambad is a multi-venture entrepreneur, an award-winning community organiser, and the co-founder of LUMI, a rapidly growing hospitality brand based in Barnsley, South Yorkshire, with global ambitions.

Bambad's entrepreneurial foundation came from watching his mother navigate the complexities of her own life. She found her independence and purpose through business and community connection, a lesson her son absorbed completely.

"I realised I had to create my own space," Bambad said. "A place where I could be heard and where my efforts would count."

He turned every environment into an opportunity to learn and connect,

participating in school debates, organising local events, and mastering new crafts. Long before he had a concrete product to sell, he was focused on building a network.

"I didn't want to just know the person running things behind closed doors. I wanted to be the person sitting at the table."

That approach delivered results. Over five years of event curation, starting with a small gathering of just 42 people on West Street in Sheffield, Bambad built an active audience of over 6,400 event-goers. Today, his digital and

physical networks across WhatsApp and social platforms exceed 24,000 members. He views this community not as passive followers, but as active partners who invested in his vision and helped shape his career.

When Bambad and his wife, Boluwatife Rebecca Adejumobi, decided to launch a business together, they had to merge two distinct ideas. He envisioned a traditional beer parlour; she had experience running a restaurant in Nigeria. Instead of compromising, they combined both concepts into something unique.

"We didn't want to open just another standard Nigerian restaurant," Bambad explained. "In the UK, many spots are strictly for dining, while lounges are often too loud. We wanted to create an authentic space where people could eat, relax, and truly feel at home."

The result was LUMI. Choosing Barnsley for their first branch was a deliberate strategic move to test the market and refine operations before expanding. However, Bambad noted that this is only the beginning. “The full scope of LUMI hasn’t even been revealed yet,” he said. “The food draws the crowd for the lounge, and the lounge customers stay for the food. It’s a model where both sides support each other.”

Their professional partnership works precisely because they separate their roles clearly. At home, they discuss strategy, daily operations, and long-term goals like corporate executives. At the restaurant, they operate comfortably as a couple, balancing the intense demands of the hospitality industry.

Bambad is open about the fact that his path has been defined by significant challenges. He shares his setbacks not for sympathy, but to give fellow immigrant entrepreneurs a realistic view of the business landscape.

Like many new arrivals to the UK, he started his career working in the care sector. When he transitioned to business, he faced a series of severe hurdles: a corporate job offer revoked at the last minute, a potential investor who abruptly abandoned him on a Sheffield street at midnight, and even a physical assault by a local competitor who viewed his business as a threat. At one point, the financial and emotional pressure left him unemployed for six months.

One of his toughest professional lessons involved a Nigerian contractor hired to renovate LUMI’s first location. After taking a £7,000 deposit, the contractor cut off communication for nearly two weeks, having spent the funds on personal expenses. The project faced nearly two months of delays before outside intervention forced the contractor back to the site, and an Iraqi tradesman ultimately had to be brought in to finish the job.



“Through it all, I kept my focus entirely on the end goal, not the immediate crisis,” Bambad says. “That is how I got through it.”

He also encountered unexpected resistance and gatekeeping from established figures within his own community when he entered the food industry. Rather than letting the competition derail him, he chose to focus on his own operations.

Beyond his own businesses, Bambad dedicates significant time to advising other immigrant entrepreneurs who have the talent to succeed but feel intimidated by the UK’s legal and regulatory framework.

“A community needs multiple successful businesses to thrive,” he noted. “We have an incredible amount of talent, but people often just need a peer who understands the market to guide them through the initial steps.”

This collaborative philosophy extends to his internal management. Across his ventures, Bambad employed more than 15 staff members, maintaining

an exceptionally high retention rate. He consciously rejects the rigid, top-down management style common in some traditional businesses, choosing instead to work alongside his team.



The broader business community has taken notice of his impact. In 2025, Bambad received the Individual Community Impact Award in Manchester and was named one of the Top 100 Most Influential African Entrepreneurs in the UK. This year, he will travel to London to accept the Versatile Entrepreneur of the Year 2026 award from LWB.

His growing profile recently led to an invitation from financial technology firm LEMFI to headline their Village Square SME edition in London. He also recently took the stage at Afri-Ball 2026, a major gathering for international African creatives held at the Assembly Rooms in Newcastle.

The evening proved to be a major milestone for Bambad, who took home the Creator of the Year for Pop Culture, a testament to his extensive work in event curation and community building. His distinct style was also recognised on the red carpet, earning him the title of Best Dressed Male.

“Seeing our work recognised far beyond Sheffield was a turning point,” he said. “It proved that our business model has national and international appeal.”

As LUMI prepares to transition into a permanent, larger location, Bambad is already executing his next corporate moves. He has completed the registration and infrastructure for a completely new business venture set to launch later this year.

The long-term strategy for LUMI is entirely global. The company has already completed market analysis and research to expand the brand into major international tourism hubs, with North Africa identified as the first target market outside the UK.

“I didn’t move to this country just to get by,” Bambad said. “I came to build sustainable businesses and establish a lasting footprint.”

For others looking to build a business in a new country, Bambad shared three core rules that kept him grounded:

- **Let execution be your argument:** When doors are closed to you, rely entirely on the quality of your work. Consistent execution cannot be ignored.
- **Diversify your ventures:** Never rely on a single stream of momentum. Always have a secondary venture, a pivot strategy, or an exit plan prepared.
- **Maintain forward momentum:** Business ownership involves deeply difficult days. The only way to find a solution is to keep moving forward.

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HOW ABDULLATEEF TUNDE ABDULSALAM IS SECURING THE UK'S CYBER SUPPLY CHAIN

By Victor Ikoli



Abdullateef Tunde Abdulsalam is bridging this gap by building for the vulnerabilities nobody else is pricing for. By day, he works as a cybersecurity analyst inside a major UK financial institution. By night, he operates as the founder of Fa3Tech Limited, developing free, open-source security tools designed specifically for organisations that enterprise software budgets never intended to reach. His unique strategic edge was forged in Lagos, Nigeria. Operating in an environment of tight resources and unpredictable infrastructure, Abdulsalam learned early on to analyse systems by how they actually behave under stress, rather than how they look on paper. That practical instinct crystallised into a lifelong calling in April 2012, when he watched an active threat actor infiltrate servers he had personally helped build at Starfish Mobile Nigeria Limited.

Today, that encounter drives a suite of live,

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technically serious open-source tools including PreplQ, DefenceIQ, and CertPulse all released under a permissive Apache 2.0 license to build collective resilience across the UK. Moving fluidly between practitioner and founder, Abdulsalam has brought his human-centered security perspectives to the University of Sunderland and the NatWest Accelerator network.

In this exclusive interview with Victor Ikoli, he sits down to discuss why cyber defense must become a shared public utility, the systemic infrastructure risks facing Nigeria's booming fintech ecosystem, and how the "Lagos instinct" continues to redefine his approach to global digital defense.

Q&A

Q: How did your early experiences in Lagos shape your current perspective on systems, problem-solving, and technology?

A: Lagos teaches you to improvise. Infrastructure fails, processes break down, and you either adapt fast or you don't get things done. Growing up and working there, I developed a habit of looking past how things are supposed to work and focusing on how they work — where the pressure points are, where the gaps live.

That instinct has been directly useful in cybersecurity. The job is fundamentally about understanding systems under stress, and Lagos gave me an early education in that. I also came up in an environment where resources were limited, and expectations were high. You learned to build with what you had. That's still how I approach product development today.

Q: When did cybersecurity become more than just a career path for you? Was there a defining moment?

A: April 2012. I was working as an IT support and operations for Starfish Mobile Nigeria Limited, a value-added service provider in the telecoms sector. Our service revenue dropped sharply, and server utilisation spiked in a way that didn't make sense. Eventually, we established that a threat actor had gained unauthorised access to our infrastructure and was using it for their own

purposes — running tools on our servers, quietly draining what we had built.



That was the moment it became personal. You don't forget watching an adversary work inside something you helped build. I wanted to understand exactly how that happened, how it could be detected earlier, and how to stop it from happening again. That question has never really left me.

Q: What gap did you identify that led you to establish Fa3Tech Limited and begin building your own tools?

A: Working inside a regulated financial institution, I kept encountering smaller organisations — suppliers, partners, companies earlier in their journey — that had real security gaps and no realistic route to addressing them. The tools that exist are mostly built for enterprise budgets. A compliance platform that costs £40,000 a year is not accessible to a 20-person fintech, an NHS-adjacent supplier, or a community organisation. So those organisations either go without, or they manage with spreadsheets and good intentions. [1]

Fa3Tech exists to close that gap. Not by building cheaper versions of enterprise tools, but by building tools that are architecturally honest about who they're for. Free, open source, and designed from the ground up for organisations that don't have a dedicated security function. The founding insight was that cyber resilience in the UK is a collective infrastructure problem, not just a competitive advantage problem.

Q: Why was it important to you to make these tools free and open source, despite their commercial value?

A: Because the organisations that most need them are the ones least able to pay for them. That's not a sentiment — it's an observation from working in this sector for over six years in the UK. The cyber risk is not concentrated at large institutions. It's distributed across the whole supply chain, including the smallest links.

Making these tools open-source means any organisation can adopt them, any developer can improve them, and any government or academic institution can audit them. The Apache 2.0 licence is deliberate — it allows commercial use, so organisations can build on the code without restriction. That's the outcome I want. Wide adoption, not revenue capture.

The commercial case for open source is also real. If PreplQ helps thousands of UK organisations improve their security posture, that has a positive effect on the whole ecosystem — including the large institutions and insurers who are downstream of those organisations in their supply chains.

Q: Nigeria's digital payments environment is fast expanding. What excites you most about this development, and where do you see the greatest risks?

A: The scale of what's happened in a short time is genuinely remarkable. Nigeria has built one of the most dynamic payment ecosystems on the continent. Mobile money, fintechs like Flutterwave and Paystack, the eNaira experiment, and interbank infrastructure — the pace of change has been extraordinary, and millions of people who were previously excluded from formal financial services now have access.

What excites me most is that the infrastructure is being built by people who understand the Nigerian context — the connectivity constraints, the trust dynamics, the regulatory environment. It's not a copy-paste of Western models.

The greatest risks are at the infrastructure layer. The Remita breach allegations are

instructive. When a single platform processes 90% of government payments and a threat actor claims to have extracted HSM keys and source code, that's a systemic risk to national financial infrastructure. The security investment needs to keep pace with the growth. It isn't yet.



Q: What significant lessons may Nigeria learn from more advanced financial systems such as the United Kingdom, and where should it take a different approach?

A: The UK's most valuable lesson is regulatory architecture. The FCA, PRA, and frameworks like DORA give institutions clear, enforceable standards with teeth. Nigeria's regulatory environment is maturing — the NDPA is a meaningful step — but enforcement consistency is still developing. Firms respond to incentives, and right now, the consequences for poor security practices are not yet severe enough to drive proactive, widespread investment.

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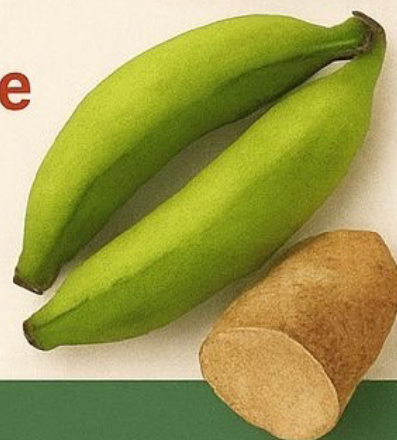
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THE GOOD GIRL TRAP IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

High-achieving women are burning out to maintain harmony, and Bukie Adebola-Ezeh believes this is detrimental to their companies.

By Vantage Editorial

Let's be completely honest about high-achieving women in the corporate world. The unwritten contract is a total trap. For decades, the system has demanded one thing: be accessible, say yes to everything, and prove your worth by working yourself to the bone.

It works on paper. Revenue targets look great. But beneath the surface? Complete personal depletion.

This isn't a simple time-management issue. It is what business strategist Bukie Adebola-Ezeh calls the "Good Girl Blueprint."

Adebola-Ezeh, the founder of Bukie Signature Consulting and the mastermind behind the social enterprise Confidence Catalyst CIC, recently received the Afriball Creator Award for Business and Finance. In an exclusive interview with Vantage Magazine, she dismantled the persistent myth that professional validation demands self-sacrifice.





"The real danger of the Good Girl Blueprint is that companies reward it as a virtue long before it ruins your operations," Adebola-Ezeh says. "From day one, women are praised for being helpful, pleasant, and easy to work with. Fine. But the trouble starts when your entire identity gets anchored to being the accommodating one."

In her advisory work with global executives, she observes this very psychological trap causing significant damage to great businesses. Smart women often prioritise popularity over establishing clear, strategic boundaries. They tend to over-explain their decisions due to fear of creating friction. Additionally, they allow operational tasks to

consume their valuable high-level strategic time. Furthermore, they often price their services excessively low to maintain harmony.

"We are trained to measure our worth by how much weight we can carry and how little space we occupy," she notes. "But the habits that get you noticed early in your career will actively choke your business when you try to run an enterprise. Over-functioning is not leadership."

"True leadership takes a very different kind of guts," she states. "It means being completely okay with disappointing people when necessary. It means setting absolute boundaries without offering a 20-minute apology. It means charging exactly what your value dictates. Period."

She knows this because she lived it. Adebola-Ezeh is completely transparent about having to unlearn these exact patterns herself, remembering years where she quietly carried a massive, unsustainable workload just to prove her reliability.

Traditional consulting tells you to fix your systems to grow.

Adebola-Ezeh fixes the person. Her core premise is brutal but simple: an enterprise cannot sustainably outgrow the personal identity of the individual running it.

Through her consulting and her work with Confidence Catalyst CIC, she is on a mission to disconnect corporate achievement from physical and mental exhaustion.

“People talk about scaling and immediately count countries, office locations, and higher revenue numbers,” she says. “But real success is human. It’s the founder who stops apologising for taking up space in a boardroom. It’s the entrepreneur who realises she doesn’t have to sacrifice her health to build a profitable balance sheet.”

Her five-year roadmap focuses entirely on injecting this concept into the global business ecosystem. Her stance is clear: identity isn’t a trendy lifestyle conversation. It is the literal foundation of your commercial revenue.

“Success should not require you to leave yourself behind. The biggest thing a leader can do isn’t collecting awards or commanding a stage. It’s helping other people remember exactly who they were before the market told them who to be.”

Her recent win at the Afriball Creator Award is the perfect example of this philosophy. While the public applauds the shiny trophy, Adebola-Ezeh sees it as just the quiet accumulation of unapplauded resilience.

Whether she is coaching founders through complex pricing models or setting up community initiatives, her focus

remains far away from empty PR optics.



“Impact is usually incredibly quiet,” she concludes. “It happens in a closed room when a business owner completely changes her operating model because she finally recognizes her own worth. Trophies are great, but changed trajectories are the only metric that matters.”

“People see the big stage. They don’t see the years spent building in empty rooms,” she reflects. “They don’t see the late-night strategy shifts, the financial risks, or the raw self-doubt when you wonder if anyone is actually listening to your message. An award isn’t validation. It’s just evidence that you kept showing up when nobody was clapping.”

The market is forcing professionals to run faster and faster. Adebola-Ezeh’s message is a necessary pattern interrupt. If your business is stuck, don’t buy another software tool. Drop the blueprint. Lead from clarity, not fear.

BEYOND THE BALLOT BOX:

HOW JENNIFER ORJI IS REWRITING THE DIASPORA LEADERSHIP NARRATIVE IN THE NORTH EAST.

By Vantage Desk

Forget the old immigrant trope of just keeping your head down and working hard. The modern African diaspora story is changing fast. It is no longer defined by how far you traveled, but by how radically you choose to reinvent the space around you.

Look at Tyne and Wear. A new generation of women is blending heritage, ambition, and local activism into a completely different style of leadership.

In Sunderland and Washington, Jennifer Obianuju Orji is at the absolute centre of this shift.

Her life does not stay in one neat lane. She is balancing a dense doctoral research load, running a fast-growing charity, raising a family, and navigating the weird, textured realities of British municipal life without shrinking her Nigerian identity. It is a balancing act that will feel incredibly familiar to anyone in the diaspora: that constant, heavy juggle between your roots, your credentials, and the community you choose to fight for.

So when Orji threw her hat into the 2026 Washington East council race as a first-time Labour and Co-operative candidate, it wasn't a sudden political stunt. It was just the logical next step for a life already defined by service.

She won 789 votes. Sure, the overall seat went elsewhere, but the raw numbers miss the real point. The breakthrough was her sheer presence: a Nigerian-born academic walking the estates of Washington East, bringing the warmth of Ubuntu directly to doorsteps that had never experienced anything like it before. No polished PR team. No stiff scripts. Just raw, human connection. And that is exactly why it worked.

Concrete realities vs. Academic theories

"A political badge or a fancy title means absolutely nothing if you're terrified of looking at what people are actually surviving every single day," Orji says. Her



voice is calm, but the words hit hard. She is someone who has viewed the system from both sides of the glass.

The campaign trail wasn't a random leap into the unknown for her. It was just an extension of her day job. As the engine behind Holding Hands Together CIO, she has spent years building a vital safety net for women, migrant families, and isolated groups across the North East. Her calendar is already packed with real stories, real crises, and real people.

But the Washington East campaign turned up the volume on those struggles.

On the doorsteps, people weren't talking about grand economic policies. They were stressed about things like: energy bills and food costs eating through their weekly budgets. Underfunded local estates and frustrating housing maintenance delays. The quiet, crushing isolation that swallows up older neighbours. Young people desperate for something real to do with their time.

"The porches of Washington East do not care about high-level political philosophies," she notes. "People are exhausted. Some doors opened to pure anger, some to anxiety, others to a tiny bit of hope. Listening wasn't a clever campaign tactic for us. It was the entire point of the exercise."

Then came election night. Watching those 789 votes stack up beside her name didn't feel like a defeat. It felt like a massive weight of responsibility.

"Every single ballot paper is a home. A conversation. A human being who took a chance on you," she reflects. "You don't just pack up and walk away from that kind of trust."

Blending the ivory tower with grassroots grit

What makes Orji an outlier in the regional political scene is her unique intellectual backing. She is currently deep into a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) at Durham University, focusing her research squarely on systemic inequality, institutional leadership, and how to build fair systems. The twist? She refuses to let her data rot inside a university library.

Holding Hands CIO recently scaled into a registered charity, locking in major health initiatives with the NHS, addressing local healthcare disparities at the Sunderland Neighbourhood Health Summit (NNHIP), and aggressively tackling digital poverty at the TechNExT festival.

"My own life has taught me that talent is distributed completely evenly across this planet, but opportunity is heavily hoarded," she states bluntly. "Whether I'm writing a doctoral thesis or running digital skills workshops for marginalised women, the mission is identical: no one gets left behind

because of their accent, their background, or their past traumas."

Learning the practical, unglamorous mechanics of British local government came fast through a frontline masterclass with veteran community figures Beth and Graeme.

"Local politics is completely unromantic," Orji says with a laugh. "It's casework. It's chasing down broken streetlights. It's fighting council bureaucracy for families who simply do not have the time or the voice to do it themselves. It taught me that real community leadership is built through quiet consistency, not public applause."

The long game

If the local establishment expected the British political machine to burn Orji out, they are in for a surprise. She is only warming up. Her focus remains fiercely local pushing for youth spaces, family support networks, and accessible skills training through her charity channels but her perspective remains global. She sees the diaspora not as temporary outsiders, but as vital contributors with deep cultural wisdom.

Her final message is sharp, direct, and completely captures the diaspora spirit.

"To the 789 residents who backed me: thank you for your courage. To those who didn't: I respect your voice completely," Orji says. "But let me make one thing crystal clear, I am still right here. I am still listening, and I am still working. This campaign wasn't a final chapter. It was just the initiation."



THE CORONATION OF DIASPORA EXCELLENCE: INSIDE THE HISTORIC DEBUT OF AFRIBALL

By Vantage Desk

The air inside Newcastle's historic Assembly Rooms was thick with the scent of rich West African spices, the rustle of multi-layered silk Ankara, and the undeniable energy of a community claiming its space. Under the unapologetic banner of being "Culturally Loud," the inaugural Afriball & Creators Awards did not just host a gala it staged a cultural coronation. This was Black excellence on our own terms: refined, affluent, deeply rooted, and entirely self-sustained.

For visionary founder Tèinyé Boyle, Afriball is far more than a red-carpet event. It is a calculated piece of cultural engineering designed to address a systemic flaw in the Western creative economy: the trend of Black culture being consumed globally while its architects remain locked out of the financial upside.

A historic gathering that transformed a gala into a manifesto for Black autonomy, creativity, and global influence.



Boyle's strategy is simple: stop asking for invitations, and start building the estate.

"The legacy I hope to create is one of integration and sustainability, an ecosystem where future generations never have to ask for a seat at the table, because we have already built our own", Tèinyé Boyle said.

By actively knitting together distinct sectors marrying tech innovators with fashion designers, and corporate leaders with digital storytellers, Afriball is actively laying the plumbing for a self-contained, recession-proof Black

economic ecosystem.

The evening rejected the standard, sanitised "diversity gala" blueprint. Instead, it leaned entirely into a luxurious duality. Velvet British tailoring met towering geles. High-society etiquette coexisted with the unyielding bass of Afrobeats.

This deliberate fusion marks a shift in how the diaspora navigates success. It is no longer about assimilation; it is about dominance through authenticity. The institutional weight of the evening was solidified by the presence of true cultural royalty. Industrial pioneer Dr.



Adesegun Adeosun Jr. (King SMADE) was officially inducted as an Afriball Patron, while UK Member of Parliament Dame Chi Onwurah stood among the evening's highest honorees and international entrepreneur Dr. Rex Tonye Idaminabo. They were all presented with Lifetime Achievement Awards, recognising their decades spent holding open doors that others tried to lock.

The heartbeat of the night lived within the testimonies of the few award recipients, each highlighting the deep emotional tax behind building a legacy in the West.

• **Bukie Adebola Ezeh (Creator Award for Business & Finance):**

"People see an award and see a moment. What they don't see are the years behind it... the late nights, the setbacks, the risks." For Adebola-Ezeh, the trophy represents a physical receipt for years of invisible, unrewarded resilience.

• **Olabamidele Ridwon "Bambad" Badmos (Pop Culture Award):**

"I sat in the room with African



creatives from various parts of the world... different experiences, different purposes, but one uniform language: CREATIVE." Badmos noted the night completely shattered the ceiling of local limitations, validating his work on a grand, international scale.

• **Pipim Osei FRSA (Culture Shaper Honoree Award for Social Mobility & Sustainability):** highlighted the collective power radiating through the venue. "Attending the AfriBall Gala & Awards in Newcastle with Tèinyé Boyle, and his team was an incredible experience. The energy in the room was powerful, unity, pride, and a shared commitment to uplifting our communities. We must continue to challenge limiting narratives, create opportunities, and show future generations what is possible."

• **Hammed Kayode Alabi (Culture Shaper Award for Education & Social Impact):** Grounding the celebration in a sharp, necessary reality, "When you look at the news recently, you see hate against immigrants... This recognition is a reminder that leadership is not about titles, but about service, impact, and creating opportunities for others."

As the final curtains closed on The AfriBall, the message left behind was unmistakable. The African diaspora is no longer content with being the muse for global culture while remaining peripheral to the institutions that govern it.

Through meticulous execution, curation, and absolute unapologetic pride, AfriBall has set the template. We have the brilliance, we have the capital, and most importantly, we now have our own table.

The formal induction of Dr. Adesegun Adeosun Jr., widely known as King SMADE, as a Patron of AfriBall marks a monumental shifting of gears for the platform. As the co-founder of Smade Entertainment and the visionary co-founder behind Afro Nation, the world's biggest Afrobeats festival, King SMADE's involvement is the ultimate stamp of cultural legitimacy.

King SMADE has spent over a decade systematically export-driving African music and culture across Europe, the Americas, and Africa. His inclusion into the AfriBall ecosystem brings unmatched industry leverage and a lifetime of institutional knowledge. At the gala, his Lifetime Achievement Award served as a timely tribute to a man who transformed Afrobeats from a niche UK club scene into a dominant global stadium phenomenon.

Meanwhile, the AfriBall red carpet completely rewrote the rules of black-tie dressing, shifting the paradigm from rigid European standards to an explosive celebration of heritage luxury. Guests from across the United Kingdom traveled to witness the inaugural roll-call, which featured notable figures like Bisi Akins of All Things Africa.



Guests bypassed simple suits for structured silhouettes that commanded attention. Heavy jacquards, rich velvet double-breasted blazers, and capes with intricate golden embroidery brought an unmistakable royal energy to the carpet.

Traditional fabrics were completely reimaged. High-fashion gowns featured sweeping trains made of vibrant Ankara, expertly blended with modern tulle and silk corsetry. It was a masterclass in combining ancestral patterns with contemporary haute couture.

Headwear was not an accessory; it was the statement. Towering, architectural geles in metallic golds and deep crimsons were paired with sharp modern ensembles, ensuring that heritage remained literally at the top of the conversation.

AFRIBALL 2026



THE FLUID BORDERS OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME: HOW THE DIASPORA REWROTE THE WORLD CUP

By Victor Ikoli

Before a football match kicks off, the stadium falls silent, and the anthems rise as the players stand shoulder to shoulder, creating a momentary illusion of the modern nation-state. Eleven players, one anthem, and one flag. However, beyond the embroidery on the shirts and the borders begin to dissolve. The 2026 FIFA World Cup has revealed itself not just as a contest between nations, but as a living map of global migration, identity, and belonging.

For Vantage, a publication dedicated to documenting the sophistication, ambition, and global influence of African communities, this World Cup has become a profound reflection. It reveals the essence of belonging to multiple places simultaneously and how the diaspora is reshaping the world's most powerful cultural force, football.

Europe's Powerhouses, Africa's Pulse

Step into the dressing rooms of Europe's elite football nations, and the African influence is palpable. France, England, Belgium, and the Netherlands are not merely adorned with African heritage; their footballing identities are intricately woven into it.

Consider Michael Olise, for instance. Born in London to a Nigerian father and a French-

Algerian mother, he trained in English academies before dazzling the world in the blue of France. His eligibility alone paints a vivid picture of a diaspora journey. Similarly, Bukayo Saka, the son of Nigerian immigrants raised in West London, has become one of England's most cherished footballers. Even across the Atlantic, Folarin Balogun, born in New York and raised in London with Nigerian parents, embodies the fluidity of modern identity.

These players are not anomalies. They are the norm in cities like London, Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam, where second- and third-generation immigrants navigate layered identities daily. For decades, commentators framed this as a "brain drain," a loss for the African continent. But that thinking belongs to another era.

What we are witnessing today is not loss, it is a global talent empire.

African heritage is not just participating in European football; it is defining its rhythm, its swagger, its creativity. These players prove that you do not need to erase where you come from to excel where you are.



Cape Verde and the Rotterdam Blueprint

While Europe draws strength from its African roots, an intriguing reverse trend is emerging. Cape Verde, the undisputed fairytale of this World Cup, exemplifies this phenomenon.

Despite having a population smaller than a London borough, Cape Verde astounded the world by advancing to the Round of 32, even holding formidable opponents like Spain and Uruguay in its group stage. This remarkable feat raises the question: how does a nation of just over half a million compete on football's grandest stage?



The answer lies in the influence of the Cape Verdean diaspora. Cape Verde's football federation executed one of the most strategic, forward-thinking diaspora recruitment projects in modern football. More than half the squad was born outside the islands, many in the industrial port cities of the Netherlands, especially Rotterdam, home to one of the largest Cape Verdean communities in Europe.

Players like Dailon Livramento, who was born and raised in Europe, made a deeply personal decision to represent the land of their parents and grandparents. For them, the choice wasn't about geography but identity, belonging, and legacy.

Cape Verde didn't view its diaspora as a historical tragedy of displacement. Instead, it saw a global network of elite human capital and built a system to bring that talent back home. In doing so, it provided a blueprint for how small nations can leverage their global communities to disrupt football's hierarchy. This isn't just about sport. It's strategic community enterprise.

The Myth of Singular Identity
The deeper story of this World Cup is the collapse of the myth of singular identity. The modern

diaspora kid does not fit neatly into one box. You can be British in accent, Dutch in tactical education, and unshakeably African in spirit.

The knockout rounds showcased this

beautifully. Cape Verde, Morocco, and DR Congo leaned heavily on their global sons to scale new heights. Meanwhile, South Africa's Bafana Bafana reached the knockouts with a squad composed entirely of home-born, domestically developed players. Both paths are valid. Both reflect the continent's depth, diversity, and strategic range.

A historic nine African nations advanced to the Round of 32. But the true victory extends far beyond those nine flags. African excellence whether expressed in the blue of France, the three lions of England, or the green of Senegal has become the dominant currency of this World Cup. The diaspora is not a footnote. It is the storyline.

A New Map of Belonging

This World Cup has compelled the world to confront a novel reality: identity transcends borders. The notion that nationality is fixed, singular, or inherited in a linear fashion has been shattered.

Instead, we observe the emergence of fluid identity, shaped by migration, culture, ancestry, and personal choice. Football, with its global reach and emotional resonance, has become the most prominent platform for this transformation.

The diaspora is rewriting the rules of belonging. It is redefining what it means to represent a nation. It is expanding the meaning of home. And in doing so, it is reshaping the world's most beloved sport.

The Diaspora Era Has Arrived

Whether wearing European colours or African ones, diaspora players have become the connective tissue of the modern game. They are the bridge between continents, cultures, and histories. They are proof that identity is not a straight line but a constellation.

The 2026 World Cup has not just been a tournament. It has been a global exhibition of African excellence, fluid, borderless, and unapologetically expansive.

The diaspora is not just participating in the beautiful game. It is redefining it on its own terms.





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