

THE VOICE

ISSUE 1

INSPIRING VOICES. EMPOWERING CHANGE

INAUGURAL EDITION
OCTOBER 2025



FEATURED VOICES

CORDELIA EKWUEME:

Economic Empowerment & Wealth
Creation for Africans in Diaspora.

REINE MARIE ASSANA

Voice for Women & Courage for
Change.

PATRICIA ASANTE-FREMPONG

Empowering the First Generation of
Africans in the Diaspora Children

SPECIAL FEATURE:

LEVEL UP 2025 CONFERENCE

A gathering of
visionaries, leaders, and
change-makers.



AFRICANSTAKEHOLDERSINC@GMAIL.COM



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WE ARE

A community where African immigrants find economic opportunities, cultural belonging, and the power to shape their future.

OUR MISSION

Building capacity, fostering inclusion, and creating lasting opportunities for Africans in the Diaspora.

OUR VISION

A united, empowered, and resilient African diaspora community.

WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL EDITION OF **THE VOICE**

Dear Friends, Partners, and Community Members,

Over the years, I often asked myself: Why has it taken us so long to fully adapt and thrive in our adopted home, the United States?

Today, I understand. Our journey has mirrored Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs—the powerful model explaining that humans must first satisfy their basic needs before pursuing higher aspirations.

For many African immigrants, survival came first. We worked multiple jobs, went to school at night, and struggled just to put food on the table and keep a roof over our heads. Physiological needs — food, water, shelter — took precedence. Slowly, we moved toward safety — seeking stability, security, and health. Then belonging — building friendships, community ties, and finding spaces where we felt seen. Next, esteem — striving for recognition, respect, and a sense of accomplishment. And now, more and more of us are standing at the doorstep of self-actualization — seeking to grow, lead, and leave a lasting legacy. In simple terms: You cannot focus on becoming your best self if you are hungry, unsafe, or disconnected.

Our History of Migration: Lessons and Opportunities

As a community, we have traveled a long, courageous road. Yet despite our resilience, we have faced unique challenges:

- Lack of role models to guide us.
- Limited understanding of the American system and missed opportunities.
- An intense focus and reliance on academic credentials, believing that our academic qualifications alone would lift us to the top.



It is time to move from
surviving to thriving.



Where Do We Go from Here?

Individually, we have made incredible progress. But collectively, we still have more territory to conquer. It is time to move from surviving to thriving. The path forward demands more than just hard work: It demands learning the system, having a community voice, and embracing the power of communication, networking, and collaboration, because collaboration is where our greatest strength lies. Together, we can pool resources, share ideas, lift each other up, and create the kind of wealth, influence, and opportunities that none of us could achieve alone. Now is the time to go far together.

Cordelia Ekwueme, CPA



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INTRODUCING AFRICAN STAKEHOLDERS INC.

African Stakeholders Inc. (ASI) was founded with a bold and clear mission:

To empower Africans in the Diaspora through economic growth, capacity building, leadership, culture, and creating lasting solutions that uplift and strengthen our community.

Our work is built on **Six Key Pillars**

► **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

Building financial independence through entrepreneurship, real estate investment, and financial literacy.

► **YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT**

Equipping the next generation to lead with confidence, skill, and vision.

► **PROMOTION OF AFRICAN CULTURE AND HERITAGE**

Celebrating our identity and preserving our rich traditions.

► **POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Educating and mobilizing our communities for greater political participation and policy influence.

► **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND REFUGEE SUPPORT**

Ensuring every voice is heard, every injustice challenged, and every life valued.

► **HEALTHCARE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Meeting basic needs for health, housing, and wellness so our communities can flourish.

Through these pillars, we aim to **build bridges, break barriers, and create generational prosperity.**

MOVING FORWARD

We are proud of how far we have come. But we are even more excited about where we are going. Together, we will: ...

- Leverage partnerships and technology to scale our impact.
- Promote entrepreneurship, homeownership, and leadership.
- Elevate our collective voice at local, state, and national levels.
- Celebrate our culture while shaping our future.
- Create a vibrant, thriving African community for the next generation.

Thank you for joining us at the start of this incredible journey. This newsletter will be a tool to inform, inspire, and ignite action within our community. We invite you to not just read — but engage, share, collaborate, and lead with us, because our time is now and our future is bright.

Warmly,
African Stakeholders Inc. (ASI)



THE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH CREATION FOR AFRICANS IN THE DIASPORA

The African diaspora—spread across the Americas, Europe, and other parts of the world—represents one of the most dynamic, resilient, and culturally rich communities globally. Despite facing historical and ongoing barriers, Africans in the diaspora have continuously demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and determination.

However, significant disparities persist in areas such as income, asset ownership, and access to economic opportunities. To break the cycle of marginalization and ensure long-term success, economic empowerment and wealth creation must become top priorities for Africans in the diaspora.

Economic empowerment is the ability of individuals and communities to make choices and access the resources needed to improve their quality of life and financial stability. It means having control over one's economic future—through employment, entrepreneurship, education, and investment. This is one of the most powerful tools a community can use to reclaim its voice, shape its future, and build lasting legacies. For Africans in the diaspora, this principle takes on added urgency and meaning. Generations of systemic exclusion, colonialism, and racism have left many in our communities with limited access to wealth-building opportunities. But through collective action and strategic focus, this can change.

Why Economic Empowerment Matters

Economic empowerment is more than just access to jobs—it's about creating the conditions for individuals and communities to build generational wealth, exercise financial independence, and influence the systems that shape their lives. When communities are economically empowered:

- Families become more resilient to financial shocks.
- Children gain access to better education and opportunities.
- Communities can invest in infrastructure, health, and cultural preservation.
- Voices become stronger in policy-making and social change efforts.



Why It Matters to the African Diaspora

For the African diaspora, economic empowerment is also an act of reclaiming agency after centuries of systemic exclusion, colonialism, and structural racism. It allows us to rewrite the narrative and build a future based on dignity, self-determination. Economic empowerment is more than a pathway to prosperity—it's an act of restoration and resilience. It allows us to:

- Break the cycle of generational poverty
- Support our families and communities with dignity
- Invest in businesses, education, and real estate
- Strengthen our political and social influence
- Create opportunities for the next generation

When we are economically empowered, we are no longer reliant on systems that have historically excluded us. We become architects of our own success, equipped to support one another and reinvest in our homelands and host communities alike.

WHY AND HOW SHOULD AFRICANS IN THE DIASPORA GET INVOLVED IN POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT, POLICY ADVOCACY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

In today's interconnected world, Africans in the diaspora have a unique opportunity to contribute to the political landscape both in their host countries and back home. As we navigate the complexities of our identities and experiences abroad, we find ourselves at the crossroads of cultures, ideas, and aspirations. When we engage in political advancement, policy advocacy, civic engagement, and education, we not only elevate our voices but also support the broader African narrative. Together, we can shape policies that reflect our values, address pressing issues, and inspire future generations.

Why should we get involved?

The African diaspora is rich with talent, creativity, and resilience. Each one of us carries stories of struggle and triumph, and these narratives are powerful tools for change. Whether it is the challenging journey of an immigrant seeking asylum or the success of a first-generation college graduate breaking barriers, these experiences can inform political discussions and influence policy. Our collective voice can be a catalyst for addressing issues like immigration rights, racial equality, and social justice that resonate not only within our communities but also in broader society.

Take the example of former President Barack Obama, whose Kenyan heritage shaped his worldview and policies. His story inspired millions across the globe to engage in civic matters, showing that our roots can empower us to impact the world around us. The same potential exists in each of us. By participating in local elections, advocating for underrepresented communities, or simply voicing our opinions on social media, we can drive the change we wish to see.



How do we get involved?

Getting involved in political advancement starts with education. Knowledge is power, and understanding the political systems in our host countries is crucial. We need to attend town hall meetings, participate in workshops, and follow local news outlets.

Many successful organizations provide resources tailored for people who want to become politically engaged. Let us consider joining local advocacy groups focused on issues that matter to us. Whether it's climate action, healthcare reform, or educational equity, there are countless opportunities to contribute.





Moreover, we need to leverage our skills and networks. If you are a professional in law, education, or community organizing, share your expertise. Mentor younger generations or collaborate with others to create initiatives that benefit the African community. I have seen how a group of African students at a university successfully lobbied for a cultural center, fostering a space that celebrates diversity while educating the broader campus community. That's the power of civic engagement—when we join forces, our impact multiplies.

It is also vital to remember that political engagement can take many forms. Voting is just one piece. Advocacy can happen through art, storytelling, and grassroots organizing. We are part of a global narrative that can reshape policies and perceptions.



“

**OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE
CAN BE A CATALYST
FOR ADDRESSING
ISSUES LIKE
IMMIGRATION RIGHTS,
RACIAL EQUALITY, AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

”

Now is the time to act. As Africans in the diaspora, we should not be mere observers of our political landscape; we should be vital contributors. Let us challenge ourselves to speak up, engage with local issues, and push for policies that promote equality and justice.



By becoming involved in political advancement, policy advocacy, civic engagement, and education, we can ensure that our voices resonate powerfully in the corridors of power.

Take the first step today. Reach out to a local organization, join a community forum, or simply start a conversation with someone about the issues you care about. Your voice matters, and together we can create a ripple effect of change that transcends boundaries. The time for action is now—let us seize the moment and shape the future we envision for ourselves and generations to come.

LEVEL UP CONFERENCE 2025

Theme:

EMPOWER . ELEVATE . THRIVE

UNLOCKING THE POWER WITHIN FOR
GENERATIONAL WEALTH IN THE
AFRICAN DIASPORA.



SAT.
OCT. 11
9.30AM- 4PM

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CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

This year's theme, "Empower. Elevate. Thrive: Unlocking the Power Within for Generational Wealth in the African Diaspora," embodies our mission to foster entrepreneurship, investment, real estate development, and community collaboration as pathways to lasting prosperity.

By the end of the conference, attendees will walk away with actionable wealth-building strategies, meaningful connections with like-minded leaders and peers, and a renewed sense of pride in celebrating the culture and excellence of the African community. Our goal is not only to advance financial literacy but to encourage financial ownership and provide a blueprint for long-term success.

PLANNING TEAM

LEVEL UP CONFERENCE 2025



CORDELIA EKWUEME



AKOSUA ASANTE-FREMPONG



REINE MARIE ASSANA



HENRIETTA ABILI



HARUNA BRIGHT ABU

WELCOME MESSAGE

LEVEL UP CONFERENCE 2025



Cordelia Ekwueme, CPA

PRESIDENT,
AFRICAN STAKEHOLDERS'
INC. (ASI)



**WELCOME TO A
PLATFORM FOR
KNOWLEDGE,
CONNECTION,
AND ACTION**



DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, ESTEEMED SPEAKERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND VALUED PARTICIPANTS,

On behalf of African Stakeholders Inc., it is my great honor to welcome you to the Level Up Conference 2025, here at Mt. Mary University. We are deeply grateful that you have chosen to join us on this transformative journey.

Our theme this year—“**Empower and Elevate -, Thrive -, Unlocking the Power Within -, for Generational Wealth - in the African Diaspora**”—is both a vision and a call to action. It reflects the essence of who we are and what we strive for as a community.

- Empower and Elevate emphasize the necessity of education, advancement, and lifting one another as we rise.
- Thrive highlights our collective goal of economic empowerment for a flourishing African Diaspora.
- Unlocking the Power Within reminds us that our greatest strength lies in our shared resilience, culture, and determination.
- And Generational Wealth underscores our commitment to building sustainable prosperity that will not only serve us today, but endure for generations to come.

At African Stakeholders Inc., our mission is clear: to unlock the power within the African Diaspora by empowering our communities through education, collective advancement, and sustainable wealth-building strategies. We envision a future where every individual has the tools, resources, and opportunities to achieve economic independence, leaving behind a legacy of prosperity for those who come after us.

Today's conference is more than a gathering; it is a platform for knowledge, connection, and action. Through keynote addresses, dynamic panels, interactive workshops, and networking opportunities, we will learn how to transform ideas into impact, dreams into enterprises, and efforts into enduring wealth.

I invite you to engage fully, share openly, and leave here not only inspired but equipped—with strategies, partnerships, and renewed determination to level up both individually and collectively.

Together, let us empower, elevate, and thrive—unlocking the limitless potential within the African Diaspora.

Welcome to the Level Up Conference 2025. The journey to generational prosperity starts here.

CORDELIA EKWUEME,

President, African Stakeholders Inc. (ASI)

AGENDA

AT A GLANCE

Master of Ceremony
Haruna Bright Abu

Mistress of Ceremony
Patricia Asante-Frempong

09:30 – 10:00 AM

Arrival & Refreshments

- Tea, Coffee, Light Breakfast & Networking

10:00 – 10:50 AM

Opening Ceremony

- Opening Prayer & Welcome Address
- Unveiling of the 'The Voice Newsletter'
- Keynote: Harnessing Economic Power in the Diaspora – Mr. Enyi Kanu

11:00 – 11:50 AM

Plenary Session

- Panel Discussion + Q&A: From Hustle to Legacy – Building Generational Wealth (Panelists: Sahr Lebbie, Esther Inyang, Sunny Kerobo)

12:00 – 01:00 PM

Workshop Session

- Entrepreneurship – How to start, scale and fund your business (Workshop Presenters – Remi Adebogun, Bright Abu, Emmanuel Okoro)

01:00 – 02:00 PM

Networking Lunch

Catered African Cuisine and Speed Networking

02:00 – 03:40 PM

Interactive Workshops

- Swipe Smart: The Blueprint to Credit Power – Damilare Tomori
- Wealth on Demand: How to Be Your Own Banker – Susan Stevenson
- Escape the Interest Trap: Fast-Track to Freedom – Cordelia Ekwueme
- Smart Money, Low Taxes: Maximize Every Dollar- Cordelia Ekwueme

03:50 – 04:00 PM

Closing Plenary

- Closing Speech
- Call to Action & Future Initiatives

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ABOUT ENYI KANU



Enyi Kanu MBA, CFF

FOUNDER & CEO,
KANU ASSET MANAGEMENT |
WEALTHRX ADVISOR NETWORK



For forty years, Enyi Kanu has been a driving force in wealth management, renowned for his expertise in preserving capital, driving strategic growth, and implementing sophisticated tax planning.

Celebrated by leading financial institutions and media outlets, Enyi is distinguished by his innovative fusion of time-tested and cutting-edge financial strategies. As a sought-after speaker, published author, and accomplished entrepreneur, he empowers Business Owners, Healthcare Professionals, High-Net-Worth Individuals, and Successful Families to confidently navigate and execute customized financial solutions.

His guidance enables them to amplify, safeguard, and optimize their wealth and legacy with unparalleled clarity.

Enyi's acclaimed "KANU Modern Portfolio Theory Plus" framework strategically integrates diverse asset classes with a laser focus on allocation and risk mitigation. His unwavering commitment to excellence earned him the prestigious Oppenheimer Award, recognizing professionals who champion the highest standards in a dynamic economic landscape.

In 2004, Enyi established KANU Asset Management in Cincinnati, a firm dedicated to serving high-net-worth clients through a holistic, virtual family office model. By providing bespoke investment, risk management, and tax planning solutions, coupled with access to a global network of specialists, KANU empowers clients to protect, grow, and seamlessly transfer their wealth across generations, minimizing tax implications along the way.

PANELISTS



DR. SUNDAY KEROBO PHD, RN

Dr. Sunday Kerobo, PhD, RN, is a healthcare professional, public health scientist, author, and social entrepreneur whose work spans clinical practice, public health science, and organizational leadership. Based in Milwaukee, he founded and oversees multiple healthcare settings and leads the Comfort Outreach Clinic, with outreach programs in The Philippines, Ghana, and across Africa. He is also the MD/CEO of Kero Global LENDAS Ltd, a Nigerian microfinance institution providing financial solutions to businesses and individuals, employing about 50 staff across two states.

Together with his wife, he founded the Dr. Kerobo and Gloria Foundation, which provides scholarships, food, and shelter to the less privileged. His books include *The Journey to Empowerment: Building Resilience in the Face of Adversity* and *The Nigeria Paradox: Abundant Resources, Widespread Poverty*, with his forthcoming novel, *The Ghost in the Cloud*, soon to be released. As a speaker and mentor, he champions resilience, leadership, and ethical solutions to global challenges.



SAHR ARNOLD LEBBIE

Sahr Arnold Lebbie is a serial entrepreneur and CEO whose ventures bridge continents and industries. With a strategy of building businesses in developed markets to fuel industrial growth in emerging ones, he is a leading voice on transformative entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

In the United States, Mr. Lebbie founded Holistic Home Health Care and Hospice, a major provider employing nearly 300 medical personnel, and has expanded into American commercial real estate. He channels these successes into industrial projects in Sierra Leone, where, as CEO of Global Lite Refinery Sierra Leone Ltd., he is developing the nation's largest palm kernel oil refinery—an agro-processing initiative designed to add value to local produce, reduce import dependency, and generate significant economic opportunities.

Holding a Bachelor's degree in Healthcare and Business, Mr. Lebbie exemplifies cross-disciplinary expertise applied to complex challenges. As a speaker, he shares practical insights on cross-border investment, agro-processing in Africa, leveraging healthcare for global good, and diaspora entrepreneurship in driving growth.

PANELISTS



ESTHER EZEKIEL INYANG

Mrs. Esther Ezekiel Inyang is a seasoned wealth management professional with over 27 years of experience. She has served in leadership and advisory roles with some of the largest financial institutions in the United States. Her expertise spans investment management, portfolio construction, estate planning, and wealth transfer strategies, helping clients achieve long-term financial security.

Esther holds a Master of Science degree from Roosevelt University in Chicago and has been a proud resident of the Milwaukee area for nearly 30 years. She and her husband, Daniel, are blessed with two children. Beyond her professional career, Esther has a passion for traveling the world, exploring diverse cultures, and enjoying international cuisines.



WORKSHOP PRESENTERS

DAMILARE TOMORI

Damilare Tomori is a creative force and entrepreneur passionate about blending culture, creativity, and financial empowerment. As the Co-Founder of Heritage Productions and Creative Director at Bodies Event, he's built a reputation for curating experiences that connect communities and inspire growth.

Armed with a Bachelor of Arts in Digital Studio Practice, Design & Visual Communications, Damilare brings an artistic eye and strategic mindset to everything he does—whether it's producing culture-driven events or helping others elevate their financial literacy.

Beyond the creative world, Damilare is an avid financial enthusiast who strives to help others build, manage, and repair their credit. He believes financial literacy is the foundation for freedom and success—especially within communities often left out of the conversation.

At the Level Up Conference 2025, Damilare will share practical, real-world strategies for taking control of your credit and positioning yourself for financial independence. His approach is equal parts insight and inspiration—because leveling up your finances starts with shifting your mindset.

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS



REMI ADEBOGUN

Mrs. Remi Adebogun, born in Nigeria, earned a teaching degree in 1998 before migrating to the UK in 1989 to study International Business and Marketing at the University of North London (now London Metropolitan University). In 1995, she relocated to Houston, Texas, where she transitioned into nursing, beginning as a Certified Nursing Assistant and discovering a passion for elderly care.

Married since 1988, she later moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, advancing her education with an LPN diploma (2000), Associate Degree in Nursing (2003), and both BSN and MSN from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

With extensive experience across hospitals, nursing homes, and home health, she realized a vision in 2015 by opening her own assisted living facility. By 2017, she became fully self-employed, now operating multiple facilities across Milwaukee and Ozaukee County.

Passionate about empowerment, Remi advises organizations on policy development and sponsors students in the UK, Canada, and the United States, reflecting her commitment to global impact.



SUSAN STEVENSON

Susan Stevenson is an Advanced Tax Strategist, Certified Financial Fiduciary, and Financial Educator, and founding partner of Legacy Tax Truths.

She helps families and business owners reduce taxes, protect and grow wealth while building lasting financial legacies.

Guided by faith, family, and the principle that applied financial education creates freedom, Susan empowers others to achieve financial independence with clarity and confidence.



EMMANUEL OKORO

Emmanuel Okoro is a Software Engineer, real estate investor, and entrepreneur with hands-on experience in wholesaling, fix-and-flips, and buy-and-hold strategies across single-family, multifamily, and short-term rental properties. He is the founder & CEO of multiple real estate ventures, including Our Freedom Capital Investment LLC, where he helps everyday investors build generational wealth through multifamily real estate. An immigrant from Nigeria with three master's degrees—Architecture & Urban Planning (UW-Milwaukee), Geographic Information Systems (UW-Milwaukee), and Computer & Information Science (Marquette University). Emmanuel left the corporate world in 2024 to pursue real estate full-time. In just 5–6 years, he scaled his rental portfolio from 0 to 61+ units, while also operating 5 Airbnbs and acquiring land for future development. His mission is clear: to transform communities, provide quality housing, and empower others to achieve the freedom to live life on their own terms.



CORDELIA EKWUEME

Ms. Cordelia Ekwueme is a seasoned executive with over 30 years of leadership experience across the public and private sectors. She is the CEO of Livewell Financial Services, LLC, specializing in tax advisory, business consulting, and loan brokerage. Her career includes senior roles such as CEO of Alpha XP & C Ltd. (Lagos, Nigeria), Managing Director of Associated Aviation Limited, and CFO/SVP of Finance at OIC-GM Corporation (Milwaukee). She has also led organizations in mortgage and financial services, combining expertise in strategic planning, revenue growth, and organizational development.

Cordelia holds advanced degrees including an MBA in Finance and Management from Howard University, an MS in Technology from the University of Manchester (UK), and a Postgraduate Diploma in Aviation Management from the University of Geneva/IATA. She is also a Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

Passionate about community and professional service, she is a Lifetime Member of the National Association of Black Accountants, founding President of the Milwaukee African Women's Association, President of the African Stakeholders Inc., and serves on multiple nonprofit boards.



BRIGHT ABU

Bright Abu is a data engineering consultant with over 20 years of experience in data management, cloud architecture, and enterprise analytics. He is currently consulting with Baird, a financial services firm with headquarters in Milwaukee WI.

He is also the CEO of Ediamondworld LLC, a conglomerate encompassing real estate, trucking, AI, and information technology, reflecting his vision for global innovation and generational wealth creation. Academically, Bright is pursuing his Doctorate degree in business administration and leadership studies at Liberty University in Lynchburg Virginia. An avid reader and author, Bright is working on his first book in AI, *Pioneering Leadership in the Age of AI*. A servant leader and diaspora advocate, he inspires community growth and faith-driven leadership.

PLANNING TEAM

LEVEL UP CONFERENCE 2025



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SAM DAVIES



HILLARY KIBAARA
NJAGI



ETIENNE POURRIER



CHARLES DIATTA

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MONICA ASHERY



FREY FARIS



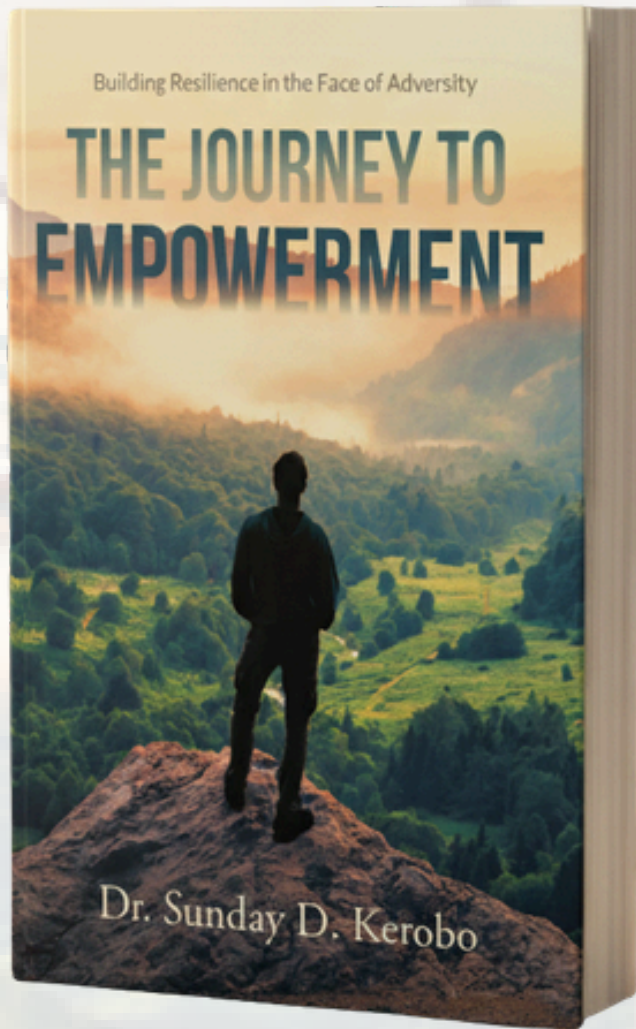
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.....30+ YEARS OF TRUSTED EXPERTISE



Our Mission:

To provide compassionate, holistic care that enhances quality of life and supports independence for every individual we serve.

Who We Are:

At Holistic Home Health Care, Inc., we believe in treating the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. Our philosophy is rooted in years of healthcare experience, cultural understanding, and a deep respect for those we serve.

We are a family-owned and operated business proudly serving Wisconsin communities for over 10 years. Our team is committed to delivering high quality care with the warmth, respect, and personal touch every client deserves.

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- 24/7 on-call hospice nurse support
- Bereavement counseling
- Coordination with physicians and care teams



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SCAN ME



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20

"Not all of us can do great things but at Holistic we do small things with Great Love"



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Company Since 1987*



Theophilus Iyasele, P.E.

Contact Information:
Theophilus Iyasele, P.E.—CEO
Olaitan Olapo, P.E.—President

7100 W. Fond Du Lac Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53218
(414) 463-2700—Tel
(414) 463-3366—Fax



Olaitan Olapo, P.E.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of **REGAL**
is to provide the very best
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setting, by assisting clients
in returning to their
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independence

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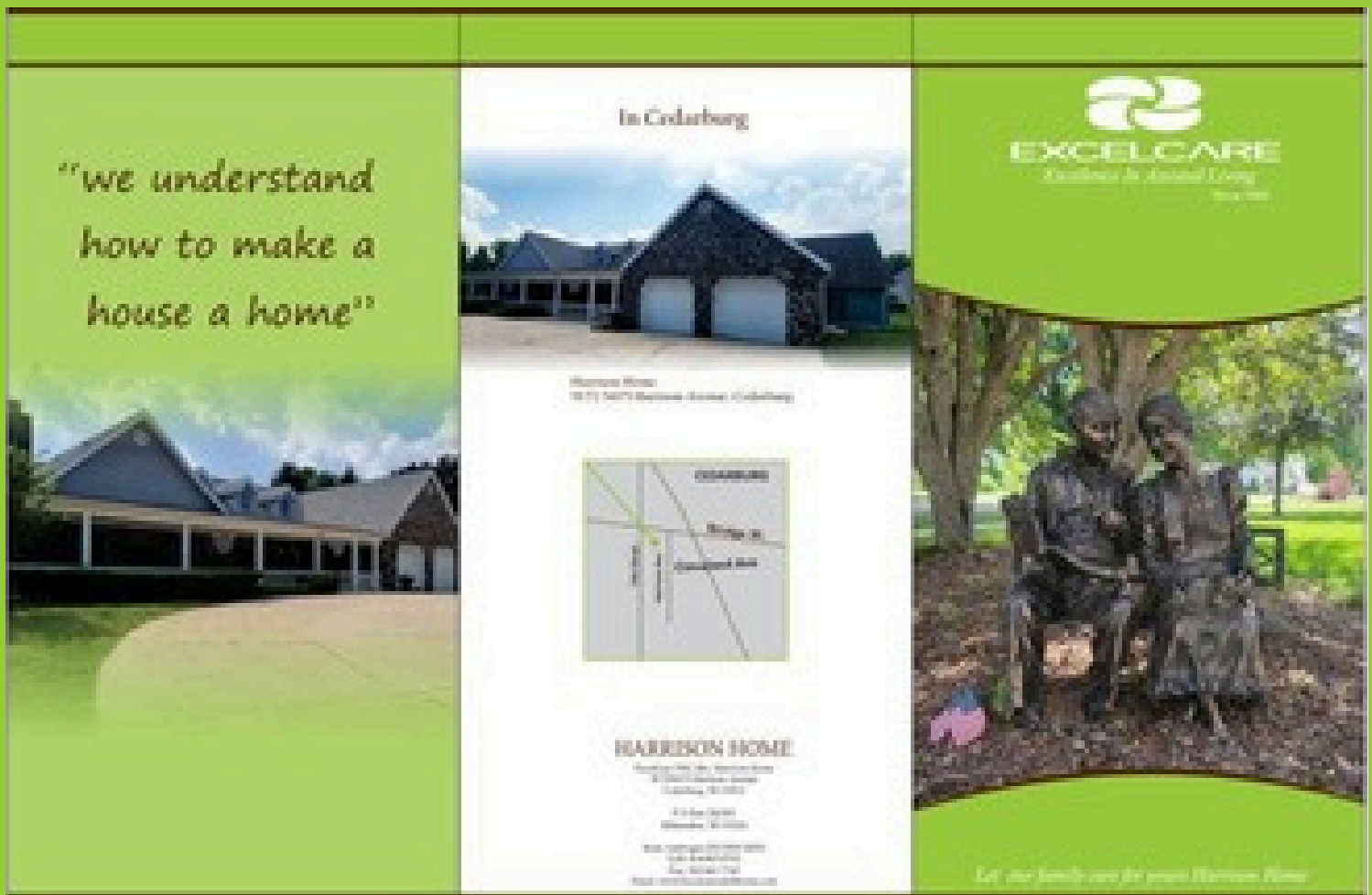


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victoryresourcesmke@gmail.com



LEVEL UP

CONFERENCE 2025

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voice **FOR** women

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

MY NAME IS REINE MARIE ASSANA, AND I AM HONORED TO SHARE A BIT OF MY JOURNEY WITH YOU IN THIS INAUGURAL ISSUE OF THE ASI NEWSLETTER.

I am an African woman who emigrated to the United States in 1994 to pursue my education at Marquette University. I was born and raised in Senegal, West Africa, in a home where independence was not just encouraged, but expected. My father, a firm believer in self-sufficiency, and to many of us, education was — and still is — the key to unlocking a lifetime of opportunity. The saying goes that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

It is this upbringing that ignited my passion for women’s issues. Although I do not label myself a feminist, I firmly believe that women are vital contributors to the strength of our families, the vibrancy of our communities, and the health of our economy and political systems.

At ASI, one of our primary goals is to ensure that women have access to quality education, meaningful employment, and an equitable share of available resources. We are particularly committed to supporting refugee women and their children — women who have faced displacement not once, but twice: first from their homelands, and again as they transition from refugee camps into an entirely new society.

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WE LOOK FORWARD TO BUILDING A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERY WOMAN IS EQUIPPED TO LEAD, GROW, AND CONTRIBUTE MEANINGFULLY TO SOCIETY.

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These women often confront significant challenges, including language barriers, limited education, and disorientation in an unfamiliar culture. ASI is proud to work alongside existing organizations to create pathways for these women to not only survive but to thrive in their new homes.

We also recognize the profound cultural shift many African families experience upon arrival in the United States. In many of our communities, the husband has traditionally been the sole breadwinner. Here, women have newfound access to resources and opportunities, which can sometimes lead to tensions within families adjusting to new dynamics.

To address these changes, ASI is planning a series of seminars and conferences designed to foster dialogue, strengthen families, and empower women to embrace leadership, entrepreneurship, and economic independence.

This is just the beginning. We look forward to building a community where every woman is equipped to lead, grow, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.



INVESTING IN HEALTHCARE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

African diaspora communities across the US and in Milwaukee play a vital role in the cultural, social, and economic fabric of their host communities. Yet, many within these communities face significant barriers to accessing quality health care and reliable health information. These challenges often stem from cultural differences, language barriers, financial limitations, systemic inequities, and, in some cases, mistrust of health institutions.

Access to healthcare and affordable and sustainable housing are two critical needs that will improve the well-being and quality of life for members of the African diaspora community. This will help to eliminate barriers, reduce disparities, and empower individuals and families to achieve better health outcomes and stable living conditions.

Why This Matters

For the African diaspora, housing and healthcare challenges are often compounded by systemic inequities. Tackling these head-on, will help families build stability, access vital care, and focus on opportunities for growth and success. Stable homes and good health do not just change individual lives- they strengthen entire communities for generations to come.

1. Disparities in Access to Care and Awareness Gaps

Health care services are not always evenly distributed.

Many African immigrants and their families may not be eligible for health care services due to diverse economic barriers.

Even when resources exist, access remains uneven. Immigration status, lack of insurance, financial hardship, or unfamiliarity with navigating complex health systems can create barriers to care. Many Africans in diaspora rely on community networks for support, but these networks may lack formal resources or connections to established health systems.

Some African immigrants may not be fully informed about preventive care, available health programs, or the importance of early screening for chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, or certain cancers. Misinformation and stigma around issues like mental health, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS further compound the problem, leaving many individuals without the knowledge or confidence to seek timely help.



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2. Cultural and Language Barriers

Too often, health information is not tailored to the linguistic or cultural nuances of African diaspora populations. Health communication is most effective when it resonates with the cultural context of the audience. Without culturally competent care and outreach, critical messages about health risks, preventive care, or available resources may not reach or resonate with the people who need them most.

3. Mental Health Needs

Mental health is an area of particular concern. In many African cultures, mental illness carries stigma, leading individuals to suffer in silence rather than seek professional help. In the diaspora, the stress of migration, cultural adjustment, and racial discrimination can increase vulnerability to depression, anxiety, and trauma. Bridging this gap requires not only resources but also culturally sensitive dialogue that normalizes mental health care.

We can begin to address some of these disparities and awareness gaps through healthcare and affordable housing initiatives and integration of both

HealthCare Initiatives

Bringing health care awareness and resources to African diaspora communities requires intentional collaboration between public health institutions, community leaders, and grassroots organizations.



This effort should include community-based health education delivered in familiar cultural and linguistic contexts, as well as targeted outreach programs that reduce barriers to access. Strong partnerships with faith-based and cultural organizations—trusted anchors within many African communities—are essential in building credibility and extending reach. At the same time, training health care providers in cultural competency helps foster trust and mutual understanding. Finally, leveraging technology such as WhatsApp groups, social media platforms, and online seminars can ensure that accurate and accessible health information is widely shared and tailored to the community's needs.



Affordable Housing Initiatives

We need to develop supportive housing solutions that address the diverse needs of our community by focusing on multiple strategies. This includes housing development and rehabilitation, working with developers and nonprofit partners to create and restore affordable housing tailored to underserved neighborhoods. It also means providing targeted support for vulnerable populations, such as seniors, immigrants, single-parent families, and low-income individuals who often face the greatest barriers to secure housing. In addition, expanding homeownership programs that offer education and guidance for first-time buyers and immigrant families will help more households build stability and long-term wealth. Finally, advocacy for housing equity is essential to stand against predatory practices and push for policies that ensure fair and just access to housing within the African community.

EMPOWERING THE FIRST GENERATION OF AFRICANS IN THE DIASPORA CHILDREN

The children of Africans in the U.S. diaspora grow up at the intersection of two worlds. They inherit the traditions, values, and resilience of Africa while navigating the opportunities and challenges of American society. This unique position gives them great potential—but it also requires intentional guidance to cultivate leadership, identity, and confidence.

Through leadership training, Youth Hubs, internship programs, youth forums and councils, as well as sports and arts initiatives, we can create a powerful movement for youth empowerment across the African diaspora.



Preserving Cultural Identity and Bridging the Gap.

We believe that one of the primary initiatives in youth development is ensuring young people are rooted in who they are. Children of African immigrants often face pressures to assimilate, which can sometimes cause them to downplay or distance themselves from their heritage. Leadership development must therefore include programs that celebrate African languages, history, music, and values. When children understand the richness of their roots, they build pride in their identity, and it serves as a foundation for strong leadership.

Diaspora youth often find themselves negotiating between their parents' expectations and American norms. This dual reality can create tension but also offers a unique strength: the ability to move fluidly between cultures.

With mentorship, these children can turn cultural navigation into leadership skills including empathy, adaptability, and cross-cultural communication—that prepare them for roles in diverse professional and civic spaces.

Academic and Career Empowerment

Academic and career empowerment for children of Africans in the diaspora requires building strong support systems that both honor cultural values and address systemic barriers. While educational achievement is deeply emphasized in many African households, diaspora youth often navigate environments where racial bias, lack of representation, and limited access to mentorship can hinder their progress. Empowerment efforts should therefore focus on providing culturally relevant mentorship programs, access to scholarships and career development resources, and opportunities for leadership training.

Collaborations with schools, universities, and professional networks can help create pipelines that connect youth to internships, apprenticeships, and role models who reflect their identities. By fostering both academic excellence and career readiness, these initiatives can equip African diaspora youth with the tools and confidence to thrive in competitive environments while staying connected to their cultural heritage.

Building Confidence and Voice

Leadership requires voice. Many African children are raised with values of respect and humility, which are positive, but sometimes discourage them from speaking out or asserting themselves. ASI will engage the youth in programs that foster public speaking, debate, entrepreneurship, and creative expression to give young people platforms to build confidence and leadership presence.

We should build more than just programs, we should build future leaders. The children of Africans in the U.S. diaspora are positioned to become global leaders—connecting the heritage of Africa with the opportunities of America. But this will not happen by chance. It requires intentional investment in youth leadership and development: mentorship, education, cultural pride, and platforms for their voices to be heard. By nurturing this generation, we empower not just families and communities, but also the broader society they will one day lead.

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