SANNI, the dynamic mural artist upgrading your space and streets
It is always so fulfilling knowing that every week, I bring you inspiring women who are impacting lives and the nation as a whole with what they do.

Today, our cover personality is the young and dynamic SARAH SANNI.

Did you see those recently trending Elevator ‘Moulue’ and the elevator converted into a telephone booth among other street paintings on walls around Lagos? Yes, it is her; she is the genius behind them all. As a mural artist, she is upgrading spaces and streets in Lagos and Nigeria as a whole.

Listening to her bare it all gave me hope knowing that Nigeria is blessed with millennials like this who are passionate about their craft and optimistic about their future.

As usual, our committed contributors, as they know how to do best, dished us some palatable stories (if I dare say so).

They include: ‘Does Your Conflict Feel Like Combat?’, ‘Back To The Drawing Board’, ‘Meet Thakgalo Thibela, youngest active female doctor in South Africa’, ‘Thankful…that wasn’t my reality!’ and others.

The array of styles by Mozabella Designs in celebrating our Muslim readers, is also for your viewing pleasure as we wish them Eid Mubarak!

Kemi Ajumobi
Associate Editor, BusinessDay
kemi@businessdayonline.com
SARAH
SANNI, the dynamic mural artist upgrading your space and streets
BY KEMI AJUMOBI
Sarah Sanni, a self-taught Artist is the Creative Lead at CERA CERNI Murals.

Arguably one of the most recognised and sought-after female mural/aerosol Artist in Nigeria, she has created some iconic, publicly accessible and private murals. She has executed over 400 mural installations within and outside Nigeria to the satisfaction of her corporate, professional and individual clientele.

She possesses significant business and creative experience in executing 2D and 3D paintings, abstract paintings, hyper-realistic paintings and Graffiti projects for top brands in Nigeria including very reputable corporate organisations in the beverage, construction, telecoms, hospitality, education, food confectionery and service industries amongst many others.

In 2020, she expanded her Art Company by establishing her new brainchild – Cera Cerni’s Art Hub. Cera Cerni’s Art Hub is designed to be an art skills acquisition centre and gallery for art exhibitions where art is taught as well as displayed to paying customers.

The Hub is also keenly intended to be firmly etched on the social map of Lagos as the premium venue for recreational painting and recreational pottery sessions open to all sundry at all times of day. The Hub will be open to customers by the 2nd half of 2021.
Childhood Memories

I was born in Kano State, I am an indigene of Oyo State and I grew up both in Ibadan and in Lagos. I was not necessarily born with a ‘silver spoon’, may be a ‘wooden spoon’ but I was very determined to make my way in life, so I did not allow my background to determine my foreground. I am bullish about achieving my God-given dreams but patient as they do not have a shelf-life.

I enjoyed painting as a child but due to the vicissitudes of life, I did not do too much about it earlier in life though my parents never discouraged the talent. I went through school and completed my graduate programme at the University of Benin, Edo State.

Being self-taught

I have not formally attended any educational institution to learn Fine Art or painting. I have honed my skills by repetitive focus on doing better than my last installation. I have expanded my skills set sometimes while on a job. I consume a bit of literature and observe happenings in the art world. Additionally, the availability of the internet has afforded me the opportunity to learn from what other artists both in-country and internationally have done or are doing. I am a visual learner and I find that I learn quite a bit by observation.

I can confidently state that I am a product of discipline and grace. I am my greatest champion as well as my greatest competition. I aim to beat my last record, which means that I try to do any new task better than the last one. I must confess that this is a painful approach and tasking process but at this point, I don’t think I will have it any other way as I can see signs that the diligent commitment to several little things are starting to pay off.

Life of a mural/aerosol artist

It is exhilarating, very demanding and fulfilling. I experience immense bursts of joy and happiness when a client expresses satisfaction or their pleasure with the work. I am equally saddened when it appears that there is a creative difference with the client or are doing. I am a visual learner and I find that I learn quite a bit by observation.

I am running purely on grit many times as I have had to deliver Art at the speed of thought. Sometimes, the client clearly knows what they want, while other times they like us to tell them what they should want, this can be very tricky as in the past couple of years, I have to split my team and set-up ad-hoc strategy teams in the middle of executing projects, to meet prospective client expectations. What I have come to realise about this work is that it is not for those who are physically and mentally lazy.

Having executed over 400 mural installations within and outside Nigeria, how can you summarise your experiences?

Joy! When the client feels justified for considering us to execute the work because we have met and surpassed their expectations, excitement at the challenge posed by some works, relief that I am able to pay my bills from the work of my hands.

I am also learning that you have to plan to grow big and not to grow big then plan, because growth is a deliberate process. One must structure for consistent success or else mediocrity will set in.

It is my experience that I have consistently met and exceeded client’s expectations. The look of satisfaction validates the kind of effort used in execution of the Art works.

Any particular one that was tough but you finally pulled through?

The toughest, I think was a recent work which I cannot speak in detail about at the moment due to confidentiality obligations, but I can say freely it required a lot of maths skills, engineering skills amongst others. I have never had to do it before, much less at this scale, so when the client finally gave a thumbs up after many adjustments, it was a watershed moment for me.

Which do you love most and why? Between 2D, 3D, abstract, hyper realistic paintings and Graffiti

I actually do not have a particular preference; I think what I value most in any of the styles you have mentioned is details and colours. I ensure that the art works has details and the colours pop…my manager calls me the Queen of Colours.

Share on Cera Cerni’s Art Hub. The story, the journey

In the course of my mural business, I had this dream to set up an Art school as part of the mural business, where young and elderly people could have a place, outside of our regular higher institutions to get art skills. I wanted this space to be open 24hrs a day for recreational painting (otherwise referred to as paint parties) as well as recreational pottery.

I designed a business plan for this with professional financial help. I shopped it round hoping to secure possible investors but without much luck. I tried to introduce it to some high net worth individuals as well, but some thought I lacked the capacity to bring this to life or that it was not a viable business to engage in.

One of the persons I shared the idea with flatly said ‘No’ that he was not certain that I will use the money as proposed, that I may end up using it for personal consumption or to purchase expensive wigs (Bone Straight)! I even tried unsuccessfully to get into the Big Brother House on three occasions, hoping that with the winnings or attendant popularity, I may be able to earn money to fund this dream.

In reality, I cannot blame them, because they either could not catch the vision or they may have been previously burnt, but it did not deter me and I was prepared to self-finance this dream no matter how long it took. In 2020, we had prospective jobs in the pipeline then the pandemic happened, and things really slowed down with offices closed.

When the lockdown was lifted, we closed on some projects and interestingly our prospective clients profile improved greatly. Along with earnings for the mural works, I combined funding from friends and family to secure the location of the Art Hub, which is currently under-going final aesthetic renovations.

The Hub promises to be an interesting journey, again due to confidentiality obligations I cannot share some mind-blowing devel-
opments that is in the works since I made the move to activate
the Hub. I realise now that I am driven by the force of destiny
to make these moves as the response has been overwhelmingly
positive online and offline, even before we have opened the doors
to the paying public.

Are Nigerians appreciative of your type of art?
Majority of Nigerians who have interacted with our Art online
and offline have been very appreciative. We have had overwhelm-
ing more positive reviews and comments than negative. Social
Media has been a boon to my mural business. It has served as a
formal/informal catalogue, marketing tool and a platform of en-
couragement.

It is my considered opinion that Art is in our DNA, it reflects
in our fashion sense, our food, our celebrations and festive occa-
sions. Unfortunately, the economic difficulties have just relegated
art appreciation to the back burner of our minds.

Have your parents been supportive?
Due to vagaries of life, I had to take up menial jobs in my teen-
age years and at a time I was a tea server in a bank in Victoria
Island, Lagos. I grappled with many challenges and through it all
I ensured that I gained admission into the University of Benin to
study Computer Science. So, I have a bit of independent streak
running in me.

I have never been discouraged from pursuing art. It was plainly
important that I completed my formal education, but I enjoy the
support of my parents even when it did not seem like it will be a
viable career.

How important is it for parents to support their
children's goals?
The largest portion of a child's formative years is in the home,
where parents actively and properly parent the children; it will
result in a well-balanced and productive person. However, where
any parent intentionally or unintentionally set themselves up as
dream killers, they are doing a disservice not just to the child but
to their own legacy as well.

It is extremely important for children to know that they have and
will have the support of their parents. It helps a lot, and it has
helped me.

What are the gains of your craft?
Art is life. Art gives life and it inspires greater creativity. For us to
have a vibrant, lively and rich living experience as a people, we
have to increase our Art appreciation.

It can serve as a tool to improve mental wellbeing of a society; it
has the capacity to engage large swathes of young people actively
and gainfully in a sustainable manner. If we only pay scant atten-
tion to the Arts, we are setting up ourselves a very boring and
unproductive society.

What can the government and private organisations do to
support young talents like you?
Engage an Artist today, commission them to paint public and pri-
ivate spaces, let them believe that a career in art can earn a decent
living.

Improve funding for art training facilities in Nigeria both within
and without our formal training institutions.

Celebrate both young and established artists who are deserving,
for the contribution to the well-being and development of the so-
ciety.

To that youth that is giving up on himself/herself, what
do you have to say?
Stay the course! Avoid distractions, mind your business and make
sure you hydrate (a.k.a drink water).

The reward of delayed gratification, especially among
youths like you
Nothing sustainable is done in a hurry. It is not bad to desire the
good things of life but do not use the tears of people as your lad-
der to riches, it is a slippery slope.

What are you grateful for and looking forward to?
Everything. I am grateful for the grace of God and the series of
decisions that have led me here. I am grateful for the fact that
people are praising God on my account and for the expression
of the talent He has given me. I am grateful for the people God
has brought my way and who have stayed to play their part in my
life's journey. I am grateful for the opportunity I have to do this
interview as well.

I really look forward to launching the Art spaces and executing
more challenging and inspiring work for more corporate clients
and in public spaces.

Would you say your prices are expensive or affordable?
For the kind of value we deliver, our Clients are the real winners.

Who are you looking forward to working for and why?
There is a young Australian Artist CJ Hendry, who inspires me
greatly with the out-of-the-box thinking she brings to her work
and art exhibitions. It will be immensely incredible to work with
her to do something like that in Nigeria.

Do you have trainings in place?
When we launch Cera Cerni's Art Hub, one of the service offer-
ings will be art training and skills acquisition for everyone, chil-
dren to adults depending on their proficiency level.

Final words
When you stop moving you will definitely not reach your destina-
tion, but if you keep on going, you just can arrive. Keep moving!
Does Your Conflict Feel Like Combat?

BY GLADYS AGWAI

“Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.”- Max Lucado

Conflict is inevitable in your day-to-day life and can result in a massive degree of frustration, pain, discomfort, sadness, and anger. People come together within organizations, families, and friendships from a variety of geographical locations where culture, viewpoints, and intellectual backgrounds are not similar. This complicates solving disagreements even when all parties are looking at the same problem.

Conflict resolution is critical in the corporate world to reduce problem situations among employees and clients. However, as individuals, it is of equal importance to understand the impact and opportunity that conflict can bring into your life and relationships. According to Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann people handle conflict in five ways. They:

1. AVOID: When uncomfortable with confrontation and that discomfort exceeds the potential reward that can come from resolution, most people will avoid or withdraw from conflict. This results in nothing of value being contributed and no resolution.

2. DEFEAT: With this strategy, you enter conflict resolution to win at any cost. Cooperation is limited with very assertive and aggressive behavior. Your goal is to have one winner “you” with everyone else losing. This is not a good strategy that will yield positive results for group problem solving. When you do not listen to the other party, rebellion and revolution will occur.

3. ACCOMMODATE: Graciously giving in to the wishes and demands of another for the sake of harmony and appeasement is not helpful. It is like the avoidance strategy by attempting to avoid disruption. This results in the most assertive party in the conflict winning the day even when wrong.

4. COLLABORATE: To overcome conflict, you must move toward the conflict and not away from it. You can be both cooperative and assertive as needed throughout resolution. Each party can make their contribution co-creating a solution that is best for all.

5. COMPROMISE: In this scenario, each participant gives up something they want, and no one gets everything they want. It does not mean you have to be completely happy with the outcome. However, the outcome is fair.

The goal of conflict resolution is not about being right or wrong but to reach a solution where everyone wins. Determine the needs of each party before focusing on the solution. Use these seven tips to resolve conflict within your organization, team, spouse/partner, family, or friend relationships.

1. CLARITY: What is the source of the conflict? What are the needs not being met for each party? The goal is to understand how the issue came to exist and grow. It is important to gain agreement on the source of the problem. You must be considerate of each other’s perspective. I did not say agreement but respect of their feelings and perspective. Be inquisitive with integrity and intention to gain mutual understanding and respect.
2. **SAFETY AND PRIVACY**: It is especially important that each party feels safe to have the resolution discussion. It must be in a private place to help ensure an open and honest dialogue. Allow enough and equal time for meaningful discussion as well.

3. **ACTIVELY LISTEN and SPEAK**: Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. It defuses the situation while you listen with openness to the complete message being communicated. You must not only listen but speak up with honesty, confidence, and conviction while understanding your boundaries. You must know what is important to you and what to let go. Speak in power using “I” instead of “you”.

4. **INVESTIGATE AND REFLECT**: After listening, learning, and understanding with agreement to the overall premise of the conflict, take some time to reflect on all that was discussed. If you have questions, search for those answers. Do not prejudge based on what you heard. What more needs to be investigated to ensure you have most of the information required to make your decision. This may mean having ‘confidential’ conversations with others close to the situation who can add additional value.

5. **COMMON GOAL**: Come together again to meet restating the common goal and objective which is to resolve the conflict ensuring it does not resurface. Now is the time to focus on brainstorming the various ways to meet the common goal.

6. **AGREE**: It is important for each party to develop their conclusion on the best solution for the problem. The solutions should be ones both parties can live with by finding common ground. Also, agree on each party’s responsibility to maintain resolution of the conflict reiterating the root cause.

7. **EVALUATE**: Do not assume the issue is resolved. Keep an open eye on the agreed solution and assess its effectiveness. If you find the issues resurfacing, act using the strategies noted to include exiting the relationship. Understand the lessons learned from the conflict and your improvements to be made in the future. Conflict will happen again.

Ask and answer these questions:
What is a current or recent conflict? Which of the above strategies do you typically use? How can you change how you handle conflict to have better outcomes? How has the other party used these strategies and how can you offset it to achieve better outcomes? If the relationship is not in your best interest, what is your strategy to make a peaceful exit?

Conflict is a part of your daily life and can feel like a never-ending war whether in the workplace or personal relationships. This makes it especially important to learn how to manage conflict. The strategies noted on how you can deal with and resolve conflict will help ensure combat and war is not your experience. The conflict should NOT be managing you! Do not shy away from conflict. Get professional help to resolve conflicts both in the workplace and personally as required to achieve peace and mutual understanding.

“To practice conflict resolution, we must completely abandon the goal of getting people to do what we want.” Marshall B. Rosenberg

Gladys Agwai spent 30 years as a corporate executive leader within IBM in the US, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya. Her leadership experiences spanned across multiple functional areas, such as, Sales, Marketing, Financial, and Operations, key industries in Public Sector, Banking, Telecommunications, and Small Medium Enterprises, and cultures. She received multiple top leadership and sales awards throughout her career. She was sought out for an IBM Executive Loan program where she spent seven years working with the Committee for the Olympic Games with game changing thought leadership on its resource strategy that was implemented for future Olympic games. She is the Founder & CEO of Ignite Within.

Gladys Agwai can be reached at ignitewithin.org.
The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has lauded the National Assembly (NASS) for its move to create 111 special additional seats for women in the two chambers of the NASS.

This is commendation comes months after the president, Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan pledged that the Senate, amend the Nigerian Constitution to ensure gender parity, enact laws to improve the fortunes of women and girls and expunge provisions of the law that infringes on their rights.

Lawan’s pledge was in commemoration of the last International Women’s Day held in March.

Tony Ojukwu, executive secretary, NHRC, in a statement signed by Fatimah Agwai-Mohammed, deputy director, Public Affairs Unit of the commission, said that the move serves as a remedy to the current low representation of women in legislative Houses in Nigeria.

In the past, the commission had collaborated with various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), UNDP and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and others in proposing ‘Women Participation in Elections Bill’ on several occasions and other related bills that would give legal backing to affirmative action towards widening the political space for women participation in politics and governance in the country.

"Most of the laws and policies in Nigeria today need affirmative action to be mainstreamed into them, so that all can appreciate and understand issues bothered on the female gender," Ojukwu said.

He further said that the bill, when passed into law, would help Nigeria tap the full potential of women in elective offices for the sustainable and improved exploitation of the Human Resources of Nigeria, adding that it would improve the nation’s rate of development.

The executive secretary commended Nigerian women, particularly the minister of Women Affairs, Pauline Tallen and deputy chief whip, Nkiruka Onyejiocha, for respectively promoting and sponsoring the Bill.

He assured Nigerian women that the commission would continue to show solidarity in every advocacy toward the passage of the bill into law, stating that NHRC will also support women in championing other causes to further protect women from discrimination and other human rights violations.

The NHRC boss praised the 9th National Assembly, the president of the Senate, Lawan and the speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila for supporting the legislative initiative.

On her part, the minister of Women Affairs, Pauline Tallen in a statement in Abuja said that the bill seeking to create 111 additional special seats for women in the National Assembly had passed the second reading in the House of Representatives.

She noted that when it becomes law, 37 additional seats will be created in the Senate and 74 in the House of Representatives.

"One additional member's seat from each of the three senatorial districts in the state will be created exclusively for women in each state House of Assembly," the minister stated.

She, however, noted that the Bill was subject to a review after four general election cycles of 16 years for the purpose of retaining, increasing or abolishing the temporary measure.
Thankful... that wasn’t my reality!

BY LONGJOHN DEBORAH

Walking into the premises, I noticed something was not right. The gate was partly closed and the water hose was leaking and messing up everywhere. The entrance door to the main building locked, but I could see traces of footprints on the well mopped mirror tile.

I was only gone for four days and it seemed like my house was one of those haunted houses that had been abandoned for ages. The way everywhere looked, one wouldn’t believe people lived here.

I called out to the security man but he was nowhere to be found. I tried to do my bit before going inside the house. Probably there was an emergency, he had to attend to that’s why he left everywhere untidy. For his sake and the safety of his job, I hoped he’ll have a good explanation about this.

I took off my heels, dropped my handbag and luggage, and swung into action. Good thing I’m not lazy, or even alien to domestic chores, I started by grabbing the hose and putting it off. I just hoped the excess water on the garden doesn’t kill the Lavender and Globe Thistle.

As I stepped in, I shut the gate properly as to give the premises a bit of privacy because I felt the whole building was bare when I walked in. After the drama titled ‘putting off the water hose’, I got wet and looked a bit tattered because I didn’t remember that my hair was laid out and would scatter it once I began the bending down, picking up and steady-ing process. It was funny because I now looked like the untidied premises I was trying so hard to tidy up!

Looking at my wet self and untidied hair, I got pissed all over again. Where on earth is this security guy and why am I here trying to do the job he’s been paid to do when untidy? Did someone try to go in and couldn’t? Now I was a bit concerned and maybe worried. What’s going on? I looked around and noticed that all the cars where at the garage, including the car my husband uses to work. How’s that possible? He was supposed to be at work. When we spoke earlier today, he was on his way to work and he said he was going to be having a long day as well. So what’s he doing at home and how can he be home and everything is in such disarray?

I didn’t tell him I was coming home because I wanted to surprise him. That’s my own special recipe to keeping our love burning. I love the way he responds to my surprises. He loves surprises and I love to surprise him. Thinking of him now has taken away the anger and now I’m eager to see him.

I know it’s been 4 days but hey, don’t blame a girl who’s hopelessly in love! Why won’t he be, he’s the perfect example of a perfect husband. I always say, if love was a person, it’ll be my husband. He’s so sweet and understanding. I’m not always home due to the nature of what I do, but whenever I’m home, it’s like I never left. No, he’s just perfect - that’s it!

The next 5 minutes of my life wasn’t something I would have been able to think up. Like the dawn, it just happened. No warnings whatsoever. I closed my eyes for a second and opened it and voila, I was in wonderland. Even if it was a dream, I should have taught about it somehow, but no. In the wondering of my restless thoughts, never had I thought towards this end or even had a hint of it at the corners of my brain.

Like I said, I was moved from 0-100 in a second. When two people commit a crime, at least one person should look like it. But in this case, it felt like I was called to judge a murder case between Love and Peace; none of them looked like the crime.

What have I been watching? As I walked into the house through the back door, I could hear voices. I followed the direction of the voice as it grew and unerectly bumped into my husband and my sister on my matrimonial bed! I slumped, I guess my fragile heart wasn’t prepared for this.

From my subconscious I could hear voices and as I slowly opened my eyes I was met with many concerned faces staring at me and asking what happened? Bad dream? Then it dawned on me, it was all a dream. I had no man-sion, security guy, cars or even husband. How can it? I was only a teenage girl! What a weird dream.

Teen mentor and an Emotion- al Intelligence enthusiast. She is passionate about the next generation and is always elated whenever she gets any oppor-tunity to share life changing experiences with teenagers. She believes she is blessed to have her goals in life is to live an impact-full life and leave a lasting leg- acy when she exits this world.
Meet Thakgalo Thibela, youngest active female doctor in South Africa

BY DESMOND OKON

Currently doing her internship at Helen Joseph Hospital in Johannesburg, Thakgalo Thibela is the youngest active female doctor in South Africa.

The 21-year-old graduated from Wits University on December 17, 2020, as a bachelor of medicine and bachelor of surgery.

A “burning desire” to want to do medicine, was out of her yearning to want to help people and give back to the community. This was a major factor that influenced her choice to do medicine.

“I felt that medicine would give me the platform to help people and I believe that a healthy person makes a better person,” she told Wits Vuvuzela, South African student newspaper.

She hopes that she can open her own clinic in the next 10-15 years to give back to her community.

Thibela was born in a small village of Violet Bank in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga—a community that still struggles with water, and good roads. She comes from a middle-class family and is the second of three girl children.

Thibela’s father, Niclaas Thibela, who works at the local municipality, told the student publication that it was a miracle that his daughter was alive.

According to him, when her mother was pregnant with her, there were some complications, and one doctor told her mother to terminate or (the mother) was going to die. The mother refused and as a result Thakgalo was born at six months.

Thibela was then promoted from grade 8 to grade 10 when she got to Lehlasedi High School, and she made it into the top 10 performing learners in the Buhlabela region when she completed her matric. “Niclaas proudly narrates.

Thibela has been instrumental in this pandemic, working on the frontline with her colleagues at Helen Joseph Hospital in Johannesburg, where she is doing her practical experiential learning. Reports say that patients and doctors alike get fascinated by her skills and level of professionalism.

Thibela got intrigued by the human brain during a dissection practical in her second year of medical school, and has developed interest in it with the hopes of specialising in neurosurgery sometime soon.

She said the brain and nervous system have always fascinated her, explaining that if the brain stops working, whether your heart is still beating or not, you are considered dead. While the brain is the most important organ in the human body for her, and as she hopes to help people get better, she would like to consider other options in medicine too.

“For the longest time I thought I wanted to be a neurosurgeon, and now that I am actually in surgery helping and seeing how things are done, I am not really sure because I have more options opening up for me now, but still in surgery,” said Thibela.

When she was in grade six, the principal from Lehlasedi High School came to the family and said, “I need this child,” and the principal from the primary school did not refuse. The primary school principal informed us and no one was against the promotion, so the following year she went to grade 8 instead of grade 7.

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When she was in grade six, the principal from Lehlasedi High School came to the family and said, “I need this child,” and the principal from the primary school did not refuse. The primary school principal informed us and no one was against the promotion, so the following year she went to grade 8 instead of grade 7.

Thibela was then promoted from grade 8 to grade 10 when she got to Lehlasedi High School, and she made it into the top 10 performing learners in the Buhlabela region when she completed her matric.” Niclaas proudly narrates.

Thibela has been instrumental in this pandemic, working on the frontline with her colleagues at Helen Joseph Hospital in Johannesburg, where she is doing her practical experiential learning. Reports say that patients and doctors alike get fascinated by her skills and level of professionalism.

Thibela got intrigued by the human brain during a dissection practical in her second year of medical school, and has developed interest in it with the hopes of specialising in neurosurgery sometime soon.

She said the brain and nervous system have always fascinated her, explaining that if the brain stops working, whether your heart is still beating or not, you are considered dead. While the brain is the most important organ in the human body for her, and as she hopes to help people get better, she would like to consider other options in medicine too.

“For the longest time I thought I wanted to be a neurosurgeon, and now that I am actually in surgery helping and seeing how things are done, I am not really sure because I have more options opening up for me now, but still in surgery,” said Thibela.
Back to the Drawing Board

BY ADAOHA NJEMANZE

African entrepreneurs have shown a high degree of intellect and innovation over the years, despite being plagued by certain policies enacted by the policymakers in power and the general environment. It’s amazing to see how creative innovations come to fruition by young people, from creation to distribution to customers. Africa has become a hotspot for foreign investors looking to discover and collaborate on the next great project, but failure seems to be a sensitive topic in Africa.

Failure is so dreaded that as an entrepreneur, the expectation is that you should try to succeed rather than fail. Businesses who have struggled have suffered internally, with founders feeling demoralised and rejected by colleagues who believe they should have treated the business better, resulting in success.

Our fear of failure stems from a culture that has conditioned us to believe that failure is not acceptable, leaving entrepreneurs with little or no ways of coping. Various failures have emotional consequences, and coping mechanisms such as extended support groups like family or behavioural re-alignment are required to address loss. Internalised feelings of failure and a weak support structure sometimes reveal a lack of support, instead of implying that failure is only temporary. Regardless of our ability to excel as Africans, the amount of masterclasses and discussions based on performance should begin to involve failure tactics and how best to work around it.

Any good business owner has made mistakes; the odds of doing things right the first time vary. That is why returning to the drawing board provides you with a new outlook at all times. We should be able to public-ly discuss our failures and how we struggled at each venture, as well as what went wrong with our decisions.

After a failed enterprise, African founders should be able to ask themselves the following questions without fear of being judged or stigmatised as failures. Instead of critique, these issues should be approached with ‘fresh eyes’. Was the research not long enough to reach the aim? Were the objectives too weak to be long-term?

Our western contemporaries talk openly about failing plans, which may explain why they rebound so quickly. Failure has been taught to them as a life lesson, but how you pick up defines how far the entrepreneurial venture can take you. When accomplished African entrepreneurs talk of their mistakes, they are treated with new eyes and more admiration for being too brave to admit they once struggled, as if failure can never be discussed because they are now successful.

“Last year, I spent 6 months designing a product I wouldn’t use too much, in a market I didn’t understand, with users I didn’t understand – huge mistake,” Sandi MacPherson, Editor-in-Chief Quibb, says. “It made it extremely difficult to figure out why things were or weren’t working, and I ended up creating a product that no one wanted. I could never become the product expert, which is what every founder/CEO needs to be,” she continues. Fear grips a lot of imagination in young people who feel that most chances come only once and that they must sustain winning streaks in existence as a result of how failure is approached. While the African mindset has conditioned us to be strong and resilient throughout all aspects of existence, it has failed to demonstrate that life experiences teach the most important lessons in development.

“The entrepreneur is the outcome of a series of short term successes AND failures” – Tony Elumelu

Because in as much as we want to be perfect in everything that we do, the mistakes we make shouldn’t make us fearful to try again, they should fuel us to keep going and do better” says Tshiamiso Kgomyane, founder of SHE Legal Co. (South Africa)

No matter where you come from, entrepreneurship is never as easy as it seems. Most people can always see the outcome of the hard work, such as being your own boss, making a positive impact on the society, and directing your own career; they will not understand the obstacles you had to overcome or the unsuccessful ventures; the story will still be tied to success, but don’t be afraid to go back to the drawing board if it seems you can’t get it right.

“Success in entrepreneurship is the outcome of a series of short term successes AND failures” – Tony Elumelu

Adaoha Njemanze is a public relations professional and a communications strategist with over six years’ experience practice. She is the founder and CEO of NOVVA Media and Communications, a Boutique Public Relations Firm which has worked and consulted for different brands across all sectors. She is also the founder of the NOVVA Children’s Initiative, which aims to provide the requisite educational materials for better learning for children living in slum areas.
Mozabella is a bespoke fashion brand known for their beautiful designs. Their bridal wears are out of this world as each bride that wears their designs always beams with endless smiles, because Mozabella knows how to make their day. They also offer trainings in their school of fashion.

The Mozabella woman is confident, graceful and elegant.

We have chosen some of their exquisite designs for you in this season as our Muslim friends celebrate Eid Al-Fitr
Chicken Gyros

Chicken Gyros is surprisingly easy to make at home! Made with yogurt-marinated chicken tenders that boast huge flavors all wrapped up in pita bread, along with a creamy tangy garlicky sauce and all the fixings you love. Every bit of this classic dish is messy good!

INGREDIENTS
• 1-pound chicken tenders

GREEK CHICKEN MARINADE
• 2 tablespoons (28ml) olive oil
• 6 cloves garlic , minced
• 1 tablespoon (15ml) lemon juice
• 1 tablespoon (6g) lemon zest
• ½ tablespoon (1.37g) fresh thyme , chopped
• 1 tablespoon (3.35g) oregano , chopped
• 1 tablespoon (4g) parsley , chopped
• pinch of nutmeg
• salt and pepper to taste
• ¹⁄₂ cup (122.5g) Greek yogurt

FILLINGS
• 4 pitas
• Tzatziki sauce
• romaine lettuce , chopped
• 1 cucumber , seeded and sliced
• 1 large tomato , sliced
• 1 small red onion , sliced
• 8 oz (28.35g) feta cheese crumbles, optional

INSTRUCTIONS
• In a medium bowl, whisk together olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, lemon zest, thyme, oregano, rosemary, parsley, and nutmeg.
• Lightly salt the chicken, then place in a bowl and coat with the marinade. Add yogurt and continue to marinate.
• Wrap with plastic or place in an airtight container and marinate overnight in the refrigerator. Chicken is good for up to 48 hours.
• Preheat a grill pan on medium-high heat. Remove chicken from marinade. Grill chicken for about 5 minutes or more on each side or until fully cooked through, if using chicken thighs, it must be cooked a little longer.

ASSEMBLING
• Slice the cooked Greek chicken.
• Then get a plate (or a parchment paper or aluminum foil) and place the pita bread or flatbread (preferably warmed). Spread it with Tzatziki sauce, followed by chopped lettuce, and cucumber. Place the sliced chicken and top it off with tomatoes, onion, and feta cheese.
• Wrap the pita up and serve!

TIPS & NOTES:
• To bake chicken tenders, heat the oven to 375 F. Shake any excess marinade and arrange the chicken on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake the chicken for about 20 minutes or until cooked through.
• For any leftover chicken, transfer it in an airtight container and keep in the fridge for 3-4 days. Pre-assembled gyros won’t keep well in the fridge as the pita or flatbread gets soggy. Simply reheat the chicken when ready to assemble.
• Please keep in mind that nutritional information is a rough estimate and can vary greatly based on products used.

MEALS TO ENJOY
By ImmaculateBites
Seafood Paella

Seafood Paella - popular classic Spanish one-pan dish loaded with saffron-infused Arborio rice, chorizo, shrimp, mussels and boatloads of flavors. Fancy enough for a dinner date night or for entertaining a crowd. And it’s waaay easier than you think it is!

INGREDIENTS
• 3 tablespoons (42 ml) olive oil
• 6 ounces (170 g) dried chorizo sausage, sliced, and cut into half moons
• 1 tablespoon (8 g) garlic, minced
• 1 medium yellow onion, diced, about 1 cup
• 1 medium bell pepper, ½ diced, ½ sliced, ¾ –1 cup
• 1 teaspoon (1 g) thyme, diced
• 1 bay leaf
• 1 teaspoon (2 g) smoked paprika
• salt and pepper
• ½ cup (117.5 ml) dry white wine
• 15 oz (425 g) crushed tomatoes
• 2½ cups (687 ml) seafood broth or water (see notes below)
• 1 ½ cups (295.5 g) arborio rice
• ⅛ teaspoon saffron threads
• ½ cup (120 g) frozen peas, thawed
• 1 pound (453 g) large shrimp, peeled and deveined
• ½ pound (226 g) black mussels
• 2 tablespoons (8 g) chopped flat-leaf parsley
• 1 lemon, sliced

INSTRUCTIONS
• Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a large cast iron skillet or paella pan over medium high heat, add chorizo and sauté until browned, about 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove and set aside; leaving juices in pan.
• Add in garlic, onion, red bell pepper, thyme, bay leaf, smoked paprika, pinch of salt & pepper. Sauté for 3-4 minutes until onions and peppers start to soften. Add in white wine and allow liquid to evaporate, about 1-2 minutes.
• Add in the can of crushed tomatoes and seafood broth. Bring to a boil and add the rice and saffron threads. Stir the rice to combine, then lower heat to low and cover for 15 minutes. This achieves a crispy bottom layer. Add in the chorizo back in along with the thawed peas and stir. Then add the seafood on top, with the opening of the mussels facing up so they can open. Cover and cook for an additional 10 minutes then flip shrimp and cook for an additional 5-10 minutes. Shrimp should be pink and mussels should open.
• Remove from heat, top with parsley, serve with fresh lemon slices.

TIPS & NOTES:
• Seafood broth is achievable by boiling shrimp shells in 4 cups of water for 10 minutes. Drain in a fine-meshed sifter and set aside until ready to use.
• A large skillet or pan will work well if you don’t have a paella pan at home.
• Arborio rice is an Italian short-grain rice.
• Please keep in mind that nutritional information is a rough estimate and can vary greatly based on products used.
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+234 (0) 708 282 7976 | info@nitasonline.com | www.nitasonline.com