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SEYI ADISA'S BIG IDEA

WHY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MUST START EARLIER



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WHEN LEADERSHIP MOVES EARLY: WHY “LEADING AT 27” SIGNALS A SHIFT IN NIGERIA’S GOVERNANCE THINKING

Something subtle but consequential is unfolding in Nigeria’s leadership discourse, and it came into clear view in Lagos at the public presentation of *Leading at 27: How Young Leaders Can Change the World* by Honourable Seyi Adisa.



Held on April 2, 2026, the event convened an influential mix of policymakers, academics, and governance practitioners, including the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Ambassador-designate to Austria, Mrs. Florence Ajimobi, Senator Abdulfatai Buhari, Vice Chancellor of First Technical University, Ibadan, Professor Sola Ajayi, and former Oyo State Commissioner for Information, Hon. Toye Arulogun, alongside other senior voices in public service and development.

Beyond the prominence of attendees, what defined the gathering was its intellectual undercurrent. It was not merely the unveiling of a book, but a deliberate engagement with a pressing governance question: when should leadership truly begin in a society like Nigeria?

At its core, *Leading at 27* challenges a deeply rooted assumption that leadership is primarily a function of age, hierarchy, or institutional longevity. Instead, it advances a more contemporary argument that leadership is shaped by exposure, responsibility, and the deliberate cultivation of capacity at earlier stages of life.

The conversations that followed reflected a subtle but important shift among participants. Attention was no longer fixed on whether young people should lead, but on how systems, institutions, and mentorship structures can better enable early leadership without compromising accountability or effectiveness.

In that sense, the event functioned as both a launch and a diagnostic moment, exposing gaps in Nigeria's leadership pipeline while highlighting the urgency of reform.

*For EnterpriseCEO, *Leading at 27* represents more than a publication. It signals a growing consensus that leadership development must be intentional, structured, and no longer delayed by tradition.*





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“THE WORLD HAS BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MESSAGE” - FLORENCE AJIMOBI ON SEYI ADISA’S LEADING AT 27

At a time when conversations around leadership, integrity, and youth development have become increasingly urgent across Nigeria, former Oyo State First Lady, Mrs. Florence Ajimobi, delivered a deeply reflective and inspiring speech at the launch of *Leading at 27*, a new book by Seyi Adisa. Speaking before an audience of political leaders, professionals, and young entrepreneurs, she described the book as a powerful reminder that true leadership is built not on titles or influence, but on character, discipline, and purpose.

Mrs. Ajimobi said leadership without character ultimately leads to failure, stressing that many young people pursue influence without understanding the responsibility and discipline true leadership requires.

“For you to be successful anywhere, you must have the character to be in that position,” she said. “If that is missing, definitely you are not going to succeed.”

She lamented the increasing trend where “noise is mistaken for leadership and entitlement for excellence,” noting that many talented youths lose direction after attaining positions of influence.

Reflecting on Adisa’s journey, she praised his integrity, humility, and years of service under her late husband, Abiola Ajimobi, where he served as Principal Private Secretary for eight years.

Mrs. Ajimobi described *Leading at 27* as more than a leadership manual, calling it a practical reflection on responsibility, courage, integrity, and purpose-driven leadership. She urged readers to see the book as a call to invest in the character development of emerging leaders and create spaces where young people can grow with purpose and integrity.

“He Was Speaking From My Mind” - Dr. Oduwole Shares First Encounter with Seyi Adisa

Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole was also another guest at the book launch of *Leadership at 27*, an event that drew distinguished personalities from public service, governance, and professional circles to celebrate Honorable Seyi Adisa's leadership journey and literary contribution.

In her remarks, Dr. Oduwole offered a deeply reflective account of her connection to the author and her reasons for attending personally. She noted that her presence was driven not only by invitation but by a personal recognition of the story being told.

She recalled her first encounter with Honorable Seyi Adisa at a public event where he was speaking, describing it as a moment of unexpected intellectual resonance. According to her, his speech carried such clarity and conviction that it felt remarkably familiar. “It was as though he was speaking from my own mind,” she said, explaining that she was struck by the precision and alignment of thought. This, she noted, led her to wonder about his identity even before they had formally met.



Dr. Oduwole further explained that when they eventually met in person, that initial impression evolved into a sustained professional connection rooted in shared values in public service. Over time, she observed his steady growth, describing him as consistent, principled, and committed to excellence without losing humility.

She commended the significance of the book, noting that *Leadership at 27* goes beyond a personal story to reflect the realities of early leadership, discipline, and purposeful service in public life.

“Leadership Is First Seen, Not Given” - Durotoye’s Powerful Message at Book Launch

At the book launch, Fela Durotoye delivered a powerful and intellectually charged address that blended storytelling, leadership philosophy, and generational reflection, positioning Honorable Seyi Adisa’s work as a defining contribution to Nigeria’s leadership discourse.



Introduced as a leading Nigerian leadership expert and founder of the Gemstone Group, and former presidential candidate of the Alliance for New Nigeria, Durotoye took the stage with a tone that immediately signaled both urgency and admiration. He began by paying heartfelt tribute to the Mother of the Day, Her Excellency Dr. Florence Ajimobi, acknowledging her as a critical pillar in the author’s personal and leadership development, and praising her quiet but profound influence in nurturing character and responsibility.

He then turned to Honorable Seyi Adisa, describing him as a rare embodiment of early leadership excellence. Durotoye emphasized that Adisa’s emergence into public service at 27 was not an accident of age, but evidence of a deeper reality, that leadership is first seen in character before it is confirmed by position.

He noted that authority, in Adisa's case, was not bestowed by title, but recognised through demonstrated capacity, integrity, and influence.

With compelling clarity, he challenged long-held societal assumptions about leadership, questioning the belief that age, titles, or formal authority define a leader. Instead, he reframed leadership as lived influence, moral responsibility, and the ability to shape outcomes irrespective of hierarchy.

He further praised *Leadership at 27* as more than a book, describing it as a documented experience of applied leadership rather than theoretical reflection.

Durotoye concluded by urging widespread engagement with the book, calling it a timely intervention in redefining leadership for a new generation grounded in values, courage, and purposeful service.



“Leading at 27” Framed as a Serious Response to Nigeria’s Leadership Crisis – Dr. Ini Abimbola

With decades of experience in governance and institutional reform, Dr. Ini Abimbola delivered a reflective address the
tion of leadership, legacy, and na

Opening with characteristic candour, she acknowledged the weight of her academic and professional journey, remarking that even her doctorates come with “pain,” before formally asserting her identity.

Her tone shifted from light humour to gravitas as she expressed honour in commending the work of her mentee, despite admitting she had not yet read the book.

Her connection with him was rooted in a shared passion for governance, a field she has navigated across global institutions.



From consulting for the African Union in Addis Ababa to contributing to frameworks on gender equality, peacebuilding, and post-conflict rehabilitation in West Africa, she traced a career shaped by policy and pain.

She recalled encounters with child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the psychological toll of witnessing Rwanda's history of genocide, underscoring the moral weight of governance work.

Turning to Nigeria, her message sharpened as she questioned the nation's readiness to produce authentic leaders, warning against performative authority devoid of character and preparation.



She described *Leading at 27* as “a serious intervention in a serious crisis,” arguing that it speaks directly to a generation disillusioned with politics but rich in potential.

Urging established professionals to activate their spheres of influence, she called for intentional mentorship and honest inter-generational dialogue.

She concluded by urging leadership grounded in responsibility, humility, and sustained national transformation today.

Arulogun Champions “Leading at 27” as a Timely Blueprint for Youth Leadership in Nigeria



At the launch, Professor Toye Arulogun transformed what might have been a formal literary presentation into a pointed reflection on Nigeria’s leadership reality and the urgency of generational renewal.

From the outset, he reframed the gathering as more than a ceremonial moment, anchoring it instead in a deeper national question: what does this moment demand of us as a country at a crossroads? His opening posture shifted attention away from applause and protocol toward a more sobering consideration of responsibility, timing, and the future.

He described Nigeria as a nation caught between immense youthful energy and a persistent deficit in direction. In his articulation, the challenge is not that young people lack ideas or ambition, but that systems of leadership development remain fragmented, leaving potential under-guided and often unstructured.

Within this tension, he positioned *Leading at 27* as a timely and deliberate intervention. He did not present it merely as a book, but as a response to a recurring national delay in entrusting leadership to those ready to act. The work, in his view, confronts the long-standing belief that leadership is something to be deferred rather than cultivated early through conviction, discipline, and accountability.

He further emphasized that the book speaks directly to the uncertainty many young Nigerians carry about their readiness and relevance, offering a firm assertion that leadership is not defined by age, but by purpose and courage.

By the end of his address, Professor Arulogun shifted the tone of the event from celebration to charge, urging participants to see the moment not as attendance, but as a call to actively shape a more intentional leadership future for Nigeria.

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