

"Focus on your talents and ignore the noise"

 By Leigh Andrews

30 Aug 2018

Eleni Giokos, CNN African correspondent, rounds out our Women's Month coverage by sharing her realisation that "career plus baby is doable", as well as some of the noise she's learned to ignore, like being told to cut her hair short as long hair isn't 'corporate' enough.

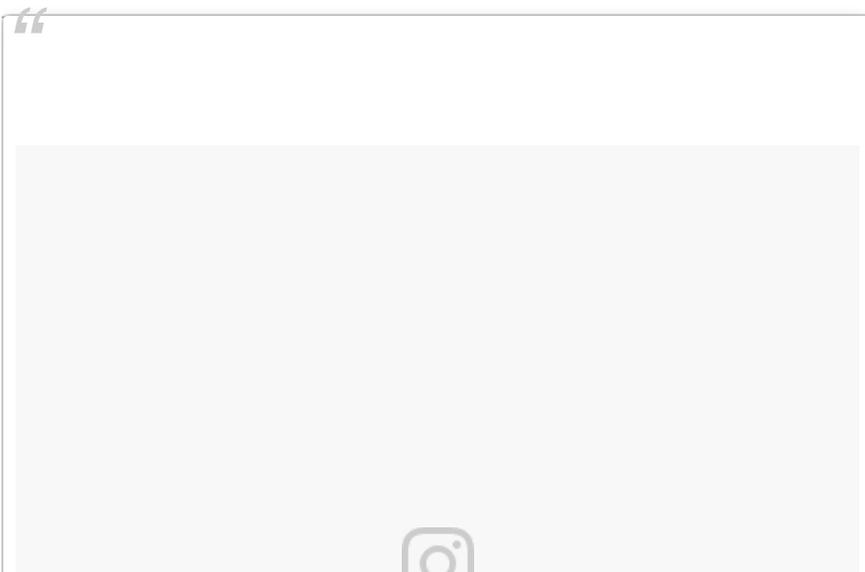


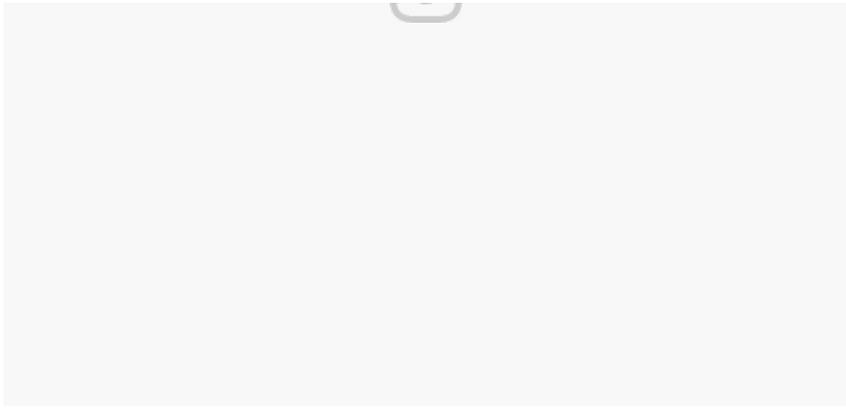
Giokos on the roof at CNN London.

Giokos has a passion for financial journalism and business news, and is currently based in the CNN network's Johannesburg bureau.

Born in Greece and raised in South Africa, Giokos graduated with an honours degree in journalism and media studies from Wits and has since proven herself with over a decade of experience working across TV, radio, print and online media across the globe.

It's broadcast media that truly has her heart though, as she says, "It's incredibly exciting! I'd pick the adrenaline that comes with covering breaking news over print any day."





Amazing studio in #NYC where all the magic happens during
#QuestMeansBusiness #CNN

A post shared by @elenigiokos on Jan 4, 2017 at 7:10am PST

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Here, amongst other things, Giokos lets us in on why the art of ad-libbing is a crucial broadcast journalism skill, as well as how personal career mentors can guide, uplift and become friends...

■ ***We last chatted two years ago – how has your career changed since then?***

I've travelled extensively across Africa and met with inspiring entrepreneurs, CEOs and leaders. I also spent time in New York City, London and Atlanta, anchoring shows like *Quest Means Business* and *CNN Money*. I've hosted panels at large conferences and focused on telling inspiring African business stories.



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Also importantly, I've become a mother. Cleo is now a 1-year-old who doesn't have a penchant for sleeping much at night but has made me realise career plus baby is doable, with the right support from family and colleagues.

■ ***That's quite a change! You've also interviewed a number of impressive business leaders in your time. Let's discuss some of the top insights you've learned from them.***

There's a common thread that links successful leaders – they're all extremely passionate about their business and their productivity levels are way above what you and I deem normal.



Eleni Gokos interviewing Aliko Dangote at 1am in a hotel room in Rwanda during a conference.

I once interviewed Aliko Dangote at 1am in a hotel room in Rwanda during a conference. I was shocked to see him continue his day with more meetings after our interview. Tony Elumelu, Precious Moloi-Motsepe, Stephen Saad do the same thing – they don't put time limits on their day.

“ For big thinkers, after-hours doesn't exist when there's work to be done. They have complex ideas and are able to execute efficiently. Now, more than ever, African business leaders are taking into account how business impacts people's lives. Gone are the days when capitalising on a gap in the market was the endgame, now it's about impacting society. ”

Global leaders like Bill Gates, Arianna Huffington and Richard Branson are constantly innovating and working on projects that will influence humanity in some way. I always walk away from such interviews with nuggets of advice – it really does boil down to working together to create a better world. It sounds like a utopian dream, but people at the top are eternal optimists and are allocating resources to make it happen.

Interestingly, before and after interviews, a lot of people talk about their families and children, which is always wonderful to hear.

■ Definitely brings a touch of the real person to the interview. Mentorship has been a strong focus for us this #WomensMonth, in the spirit of uplifting others. Who is your personal career mentor, and why?

I've been extremely fortunate to have had many mentors. When I started in broadcast media at 24-years-old, I was so hungry to learn and surrounded myself with incredible journalists. I called people I admired and asked them to guide me, and I now have a long list of mentors who have become very close friends.

Peter Ndro does all the uplifting, personal work on me. He's been there at 3am when I've had doubts about my ability to execute on projects.



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“ Bronwyn Nielsen taught me the art of ad-libbing, forcing me to speak on demand on various topics, even when I was getting a coffee. I am so grateful for learning this craft, it has set me apart in my career. It's one of the most important skills to have when you're in broadcast journalism. ”

George Glynos, David Shapiro and Simon Brown took on my daily calls – and often still do – when I was starting out as a young financial journalist.

Nikiwe Bikitsha and Mapi Mhlangu gave me so many breaks to be live on air. Nikiwe actually stood down from live crossings to give me a chance and Mapi would then do the feedback sessions, I still draw on both of them for help.



Mapi Mhlangu: eNCA's new managing director and editor-in-chief

eMedia 21 Jun 2017



Now at CNN, there is an incredible team that backs me, from on-air talent like Richard Quest and behind-the-scenes, there's Penny Manis, who heads up business news.

❏ **A strong support team is everything. List a few of the specific challenges and opportunities for women in media that you've personally faced in your career.**

Sadly, I've experienced my fair share of sexism – not only in the workplace but also during interviews. I think the #MeToo movement has lifted the lid on pertinent issues. I've noticed a shift over the past year, but there's a lot of work to be done to eradicate harassment and sexist incidents.

“ It hasn't always been easy. I remember starting out and being told to not look 'too pretty' because I won't be taken seriously. Or sent to interviews because the CEO 'likes to look at pretty girls'. Or the time I was asked to cut my hair short given long hair isn't 'corporate' enough. Needless to say, I never cut my hair and I landed a gig at CNN. ”

All these issues detract from the importance of doing a good job and disseminating information. Women should focus on their talents and ignore the noise – no one can keep a talented person down for long.



#MeToo trends in SA as women share stories of sexual harassment

Julia Breakey 17 Oct 2017



Working for CNN, however, has been eye-opening; the professionalism and protection women receive at the network has been a breath of fresh air.

❏ **Fantastic. Let's end with insights into the future of media – particularly in Africa, and the skills the media workers of the future will need to hone now to get ahead.**

Journalists now more than ever have to be the gatekeepers of truth. In a world where fake news riddles our social media timelines, basic journalistic skills are of paramount importance.





If you're an aspiring journalist, master the art of writing, storytelling and investigating every angle.

There's a global shift occurring towards digital media, but if you want a true account of what's happening in the world, the TV is still the go-to place. In Africa, mobile will dominate news consumption trends. As a result, access to news networks via mobile phone is growing and this is also breeding a new generation of African journalists.



Tell the authentic stories of Africa

Mliehi Mlekoa 31 Jan 2018



I'd love to see more African stories told by Africans. I know we've been saying this for years, but there's still huge room for growth.

Here's hoping! [Click here](#) for more on Giokos and follow her career highs on her [Twitter feed](#) and [Instagram account](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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