

Mo Abudu: Woman of many firsts

By [Phindile Xaba](#)

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Mosunmola Abudu, also known as Mo Abudu, is founder of a Pan African TV channel, EbonyLife TV, a network airing in more than 49 countries across Africa, as well as in the UK and the Caribbean.



Mo Abudu.

Born in London to Nigerian parents, eldest of three daughters, Mo Abudu's dream has always been to change the negative narrative about the continent of Africa. Her parents would relocate to Lagos, Nigeria, when she was seven, which gave her the opportunity to spend time with her grandparents who lived on a cocoa farm in Ondo State. While visiting, she would learn about Nigerian culture, building a foundation for her later career decision.

"As a continent, Africa has remained creatively silent for centuries. Our stories are seldom told outside our families and villages and often from the perspective of 'someone' looking in," she said.

A calamity befell her at age 11 when her father suddenly passed away. A year later she would move back to London where she received education at Hammersmith County Secondary School and later at the Ridgeway School in Kent, under local guardian care in Turnbridge Wells. Her dream lived on.

Media career

Her road to a media career started with a brief modelling stint while completing her Master's degree in Human Resource Management at the University of Westminster in London. After that, in the 1980s, she became a recruitment consultant in the UK and would stay in the human resources corporate field through to the 2000s when she decided to make a career switch from HR to media in her 40s.

Abudu had decided to go it alone and establish her own human resources development company, called Vic Lawrence & Associates Limited (VLA) in 1993, which provided human resources related solutions for businesses in Nigeria. The company had grown and built enviable expertise in areas including learning, training and development, outsourcing, strategy and business support. Her company had clients in oil and gas, banking and finance, healthcare and government parastatals.

Mo the media proprietor

In 2008, Abudu started out as executive producer and host of her television talk show, *Moments with Mo*. Millions of viewers tuned in and the show's reach was equal to that of Oprah.

Moments with Mo was the first syndicated daily talk show on African regional television and she interacted with presidents, Nobel laureates such as Wole Soyinka and former US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, and many more. With her show she covered a cross-section of topics including lifestyle, health, culture, politics and entertainment, contributing richly to the development of African discourse.

By 2013, Abudu had made up her mind, she was handing over the baton to young Nigerian women to host the show, took a plunge and took her investments to launch EbonyLife TV, the channel owned by her company EbonyLife Media, making it Africa's first global black entertainment and lifestyle network that aims to narrate African stories on global platforms.

She oversees five divisions at EbonyLife Media: EbonyLife TV, EbonyLife Films, EbonyLife ON, EbonyLife Studios and EbonyLife Productions Limited (UK). The organisation has an impressive filmography. *Fifty* was EbonyLife TV's first feature film, which was picked up by Netflix and released worldwide. Now, *Chief Daddy*, a comedy film starring crème de la crème of Nollywood stars which dominated the West African box office in 2018, has also made it into Netflix programming. Among its many works, EbonyLife Media's original programmes and notables is Africa's first legal series, *Castle & Castle*.

Paying it forward

Forbes once described her as "Africa's Most Successful Woman" and CNN, as "Africa's Queen of Media who conquered the continent". She was also included on The Powerlist 2018, the UK's selection of the top 100 most influential people of African and Caribbean heritage. Abudu was also listed on the Hollywood Reporter's List of the 25 Most Powerful Women in Global Television.

Abudu was instrumental in founding The Inspire Africa Foundation, a non-profit organisation focused on raising funds for implementation of transformational initiatives. In 2009, the foundation organised a charity concert – Rock with a Conscience – with other NGOs. The funds raised were used for the betterment of street children.

The sky is no limit

Abudu's vision has always been to grow EbonyTV beyond the continent. Being the first fully Nigerian-owned entertainment channel to be carried on the South African pay-TV platform DSTv and it is now on StarTimes as it expands its distribution.

"It is... with great pride that we, at EbonyLife Media, bring our stories to the world with our TV series and our films," she said as she received Médailles d'Honneur, a prestigious award bestowed on senior executives who have made their mark in the global television industry, as well as contributed to the development of the international television community.

"Ebonylife TV partnered with Disney to co-produce *Desperate Housewives Africa*, which drew rave reviews across the continent. Ebonylife TV has also acquired the rights to *Dynasty* and *Melrose Place* from CBS Intl," she said while admitting

that entrepreneurship is not for the fainthearted.

Her efforts are paying off as more global media players are vying to partner with her company, EbonyLife Films. It's 6th feature film, *Òlòtūré*'s private screening was co-hosted with the Creative Artists Agency (CAA) at CAA's Los Angeles headquarters in June 2019.

"Anyone who wishes to be an entrepreneur must know that bright ideas are great, however, that is not even half of the work; execution is everything," said Abudu.

Source: [*The Journalist*](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phindile Xaba is a seasoned journalist and media practitioner across multiple platforms. She began her career in print media at age 17; and then moved on to explore the TV industry where she worked as a television production manager, scriptwriter, publicist, producer/director, language advisor/trainer and researcher, with some of her work being showcased on SABC, M-Net, Channel 4(UK).

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