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PODCAST

**The Brookings Institution
Africa Growth Initiative**

Foresight Africa Podcast

“A Nigerian entrepreneur shares her story of innovation and transformative leadership”

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Guest:

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Episode Summary:

Ada Osakwe, a Nigerian innovator and business leader, talks about her role as an innovative entrepreneur and transformative investor. Osakwe founded the Nuli Juice Company and Agrolay Ventures, and was named Forbes Woman Africa businesswoman of the year in 2021. Addressing the gender gap in boardrooms, Osakwe says that “women leaders must support other women.”

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ORDU: I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, director of the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution, and this is *Foresight Africa* podcast.

Since 2011, the Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings has published a high-profile report entitled *Foresight Africa*. The report covers key events and trends likely to shape affairs in Africa in the year ahead. On this podcast, I engage with the report authors as well as policymakers, industry leaders, Africa's youths, and other key figures. Learn more on our website, Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast.

My guest today is Ada Osakwe. Ada is an entrepreneur and investor. She has founded two companies: Agrolay, an investment firm that makes angel investments in early stage, high-growth companies; and Nuli, an innovative beverage brand and casual dining restaurant chain with eight locations across Nigeria. Ada was the *Forbes* Africa businesswoman of the year, 2021, a young global leader of the World Economic Forum, and an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Leadership Fellow. She was also the Entrepreneur of the Year and Achiever in Agriculture awards in 2015. She serves on numerous boards of corporations and she graciously agreed to join me today to talk about her role as an entrepreneur and investor.

Ada, welcome to our podcast.

OSAKWE: Thank you so much my brother, Aloysius. It's a pleasure, a delight to be with you today.

ORDU: So, could you tell us a little bit about your personal journey prior to becoming the successful entrepreneur and investor that you are today?

OSAKWE: Oh, you're taking me back, huh? I grew up in the city of Lagos, Nigeria, same country that you're from, to a really simple family with parents who had lived and worked really only in Nigeria, but from a very young age I had a yearning to build a life of significance, I would say. And for me, that's a life that focused on impact.

Maybe it has to do with my name—as Africans there's a power in the name, and my name Ada means "first daughter." Actually, the full name Adaobi, means "first daughter of the king." So, there's great responsibility around that being the first.

And so, as I think about my personal journey to becoming this successful entrepreneur, you say, or being successful at what I do in order to achieve the impact that I seek, is one that truly represents the saying in one of my favorite books, *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho—you may have read it—and that's when you want something, all the universe conspires to help you achieve it.

And I'm really fortunate to have been able to make impact in a very unique and very diverse way: blended experiences across public and private sector, a career that's allowed me to live in across three continents—Europe, the United States, and Africa. But specifically, you know, just this blended experience across private sector, development finance, public sector, and now entrepreneurship. Started off in private

sector in investment banking, transitioned on to development finance with the African Development Bank. And that's where I was privileged to meet you, Aloysius, so much great development and impact to Africa.

And then I took this leap to go into public service. I worked as a senior advisor on investments to the minister of agriculture of Nigeria. So, wearing that hat was completely the other side of the playing field and working on policy was just an eye opener for me.

And finally rolling up my sleeves as an entrepreneur to build my own businesses and actually put my money where my mouth was for so long in actualizing impact through entrepreneurship on the continent.

So there's been varied experiences, the decisions I've made to move across all these various areas to land where I am today, I think for me it's quite telling. I've always yearned for these opportunities and in many ways I've just had the conviction to keep following my dream. So, ultimately I didn't really know how it would happen or where my path would take me. But what I do know is that I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be right now.

ORDU: That's quite a journey indeed. As I recall, you were the *Forbes Africa Business Woman of the Year* in the year 2021. How did that come about?

OSAKWE: Oh, Aloysius, pure luck, just luck. But really, I'm a big believer in that quote from Seneca, that "success is where preparation meets opportunity." I remember the first time I heard that, and I saw it or I read it somewhere, I was just like, Wow, that's so true! I'm not successful just by virtue of being lucky or being successful or working so hard or harder than everyone else that you deserve to have what you get. No, you know, you have to be prepared and work for it.

And for me, being prepared also means knowing that people are always watching. Right? People always are watching even when you don't know it, they are seeing your progress, seeing the things that you're doing, the impact that's being made. And I guess that's the case for that award.

And I still remember, you know, when you think about people watching and that's the opportunity, but when you merge that with preparedness ... I was catching a flight, I was going through terminal five at Heathrow and I saw this email that popped up on my phone—I literally was trying to catch the connecting train to the gate—and it said, Hey, we are considering you for this *Forbes Africa Award*. Can you please send us anything that just showcases the work you do and the impact you've made. I just document and I save things away, any speech I make, or any conversation I have, like today this conversation with you, I don't let it just filter away and disappear. But I try to be quite focused on keeping it.

So, I had access and I was ready because I had a folder that had all these things. And I said, Yeah, sure, have access to this folder, you see all the stuff I'm working on. And as a result, that was the preparedness that met opportunity. And I feel like that's really how that came about. You know, it's full of grace as well—I'm a believer and it's the grace of God as well.

ORDU: And for the benefit of our youths across the African continent and elsewhere, how does one get to become a World Economic Forum Young Global leader and also an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Leadership Fellow?

OSAKWE: These are two honors that I've been very privileged to have bestowed on me over time. With both cases, you have to be under 40 years of age because they focus on youth and the younger group.

The first—the Forum for the Young Global Leaders—it's part of the World Economic Forum's network. It's one of their flagship programs, or I would say communities, just about 1,500 members and alumni combined, over 120 nationalities across civic society, entrepreneurship, technology pioneers, education. In fact, your former guest, one of the guests you had on the show, David Sengeh, is a Young Global Leader as well. You have people like President Macron or Jacinda Ardern from government—you know, just a varied group of really high achievers. And I think just as long as you're a high achiever and people notice your work, you could potentially be part of this amazing, amazing community.

And the final one is the Tutu Fellowship, which is under the African Leadership Institute. It's one of their flagship programs and communities. And the difference here is that it's all young African, so it's not a global program. It's specific to the continent. And I think it's just one of the most amazing networks one can be part of as well. Just people doing amazing things to move the narrative, to change things on the continent and make impact.

ORDU: Let's now pivot to your time at the African Development Bank, when the bank was still in Tunisia. You led, as I recall, a \$100 million project—one of several—but this one particularly for the Nairobi toll road in Kenya's first transport sector public-private partnership. What was the experience in negotiating with such a multiplicity of entities? The government of Kenya, the officials from there, the World Bank was there, there were project developers—because you were in the private sector at the time in the Bank, and of course, private financiers. What was that experience like?

OSAKWE: Oh, wow. It was an eye opener, I would say. In just the complexity of what it takes to drive change in one of the most important areas that Africa needs to develop further, which is infrastructure. This toll road was going to be a transformational project. Many people knew at the time how difficult it was moving from the central business district in Nairobi all the way to the airport. The traffic, you would sit for hours. And this was potentially going to be transformational where you have private players who come in to manage and operate and make it a sustainable road that is maintained frequently and has smooth-flowing traffic.

So, for me it was just groundbreaking. And I feel really honored to have been part of those early negotiations, working with some private banks, investment banks, working on financial models one minute. Another time you're going to sit down in the World Bank office in Kenya. I don't know if there's still there, these fantastic, lovely grounds. And having conversations with the country managers, with the project heads, and really looking at the nuances of what it means to deliver such a transformational project and working with the government and the private sector.

It was at a time when we were really trying to push the notion of public-private partnerships, PPPs, in infrastructure, and the African Development Bank was so well-positioned to be that player that uses its balance sheet in such a way. So, it was it was really, really exciting to work on.

I would say as I reflect back at times like that, and we were working in infrastructure team, Aloysius, you still see with Africa needing \$100 billion a year to close the infrastructure gap. I'm like back in 2007, we were saying the same. So, why haven't things really moved? And these are some of the questions I ask myself. And it's what actually still fuels me to keep doing all I can to move the needle when it comes to impact in Africa.

ORDU: After your career in international development, at the African Development Bank, you went on to graduate school for a second master's degree, this time an MBA. You then served as senior advisor to, as you mentioned earlier, Dr. Adesina, who was then Nigeria's minister of agriculture during 2011 to 2015. As I recall it, there were many, many, many initiatives launched during this period when Adesina was in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture. So, looking back, which initiatives were you most proud of and why?

OSAKWE: As you mentioned, we were working on so many things. It was just one of the most exciting times in my career, working in government. But working with a team, or with leadership that was focused on seeing how we could utilize government and have government as only focusing on policy, paving the way for private sector to do its thing, recognizing that private sector is always there—governments come and go—but you have private sector to work in a sustainable way to guarantee the long-term success of projects and delivering development projects.

And so, we were really focused on this, what we called a government-enabled but private-sector driven type of agricultural transformation. So, in everything we did and everything I had to do as the senior advisor on investment was really with that lens. And it meant that my role was quite important because I interfaced with private sector, made the case for agriculture, made the case for Nigeria, and why they should be investing, and why they should be working with the government.

And so, one of my proudest projects brought all these elements together and it was called the Fund for Agricultural Financing in Nigeria. My background before I joined the government was in private equity. So, after business school at Northwestern Kellogg School of Management in the U.S., I joined a private equity firm in New York who were working on Africa, Africa initiatives and Africa investments.

So, I brought that lens and that mindset to government and I was like, we need to do stuff with investing in funds and supporting these fund managers who would go on to invest in other projects. And that's how we started developing the Fund for Agricultural Financing in Nigeria.

And this was fantastic because we then got to work with KfW, the Development Finance Bank of Germany, and we we actually utilized funding that had been sitting with the government of Nigeria for years, donor funding from Germany. We

repurposed that grant to utilize it in this more transformational, impactful fund. So, it had never been done before.

And so for me, that innovation was critical. It was innovative because the government was the seed investor. So, we catalyzed it and then went on to raise \$69.5 million in total to invest in projects such as farmer farming, cassava processing, edible oils processing, and a dairy processing company. Just exactly the things we wanted to see as we were looking at the value chain of agriculture.

So, for me, the top three things of why we really this was that project meant a lot to me and why it still counts as one of the biggest initiatives: The first is that we used donor money in a very efficient way because I still look at the ways sometimes donor money is used, it's just a waste. But this was used in a very efficient way and made to last and made to truly have impact.

The second thing I would say is that we addressed the key issues of the funding gap in agriculture, really focusing on processing and the SMEs in agriculture. A lot of money had been going into either primary agriculture—the smallholder farmers—or really large companies that had no risk for the banks. But just being able to put the money towards medium sized entities was big.

And then the thing for me is that it's still there today. It remains, it was sustainable. So, it truly helped us achieve that government-enabled but private-sector led transformation, because private sector is running that fund. Government money was put in place, and no one touched it, even though there was a change in government. We made sure we put structures in place to make sure that nobody tampered with it. And so, today they are still up and running. And that's why it remains one of the proudest initiatives that I was fortunate to lead.

ORDU: Let's turn to some of the companies, Ada, that you founded. The first is the Nuli Juice Company, which in 2019 and 2020 was consecutively on *Business Day's* prestigious top 100 fastest growing small- and medium-scale enterprises list. So, what was the motivation and the business case for this company?

OSAKWE: Oh, you know, Nuli is my daily bread and butter. Nuli came about when I was considering what to do after working in government and, you know, had worked and been this proponent for investing in African agriculture for so long. So, it was my way of truly rolling up my sleeves to build an agribusiness.

Our mission really is to energize healthier lifestyles in Africa with better nutrition. And we do this by focusing on buying local produce, fruits and vegetables, and food from farmers in rural areas across Nigeria and adding value of our all-natural fruit and vegetable juices as well as our food products.

So, it was just this vision to do this and I decided to act on that vision. And I've been staying that course for the last seven years and it's been quite a journey and so fulfilling. I can't even describe how fulfilling it's been the fact that just under 50 people work with the company. You know, these folks depend every day on the salary that Nuli is paying to take care of themselves, their families, their extended family to give them dignity coming into a company that respects them and that has

built its own brand equity. So, they feel proud to say that they work with the company.

And even just thinking about what we've done—we have eight restaurants today doing the farm to table meals. We use only indigenous produce. We're not importing food—we're not importing our prawns, we're not importing our chicken, we're not importing our lettuce, or even our berries—we're buying from just Plateau State in Nigeria. Some people didn't even know that we grow those and the region is cold enough to do that. We are using our coffee bean from Nigeria. Yes, Nigeria grows coffee. Our waffles on our menu—we use cassava flour. Nigeria is the largest producer of cassava in the world, over 40 million metric tons annually.

So, we have to use flour, not the wheat flour that is being imported from the U.S. No, let's support our farmers and use cassava flour. So, our cassawaffles are delicious and I hope you try it when you come to Nigeria, Aloysius.

That for me is what gets me so excited and motivates me today to keep building this company. Ultimately I think about even just the impact we've had on society. People saying they didn't know how eating fresh local food, that obviously is affordable, how we could change their health and their lifestyle and the way they approached food. So, that for me has been one of the biggest motivators.

Ultimately, I truly want to see a Nuli in D.C. one day. So, if you're walking by, Aloysius, in the next three years we should have lunch in Nuli in the city one of these days. Let's stop embracing all the brands that come into Africa all the time, be it KFC or McDonald's and folks who are increasingly coming in. Let's also see proudly African food brands and restaurants that go global.

ORDU: I couldn't agree more. You also founded Agrolay Ventures. Could you tell us more about this company? And also as an angel investor, how do you determine what startups to invest in?

OSAKWE: So, when it was time to move on from the government and my former boss was going on to become the president of the African Development Bank, I had worked with the African Development Bank for a number of years before, as I mentioned earlier, with you as well. And I was like, I'm not sure I want to go back. I have this itch now. You know, we worked with young people, we launched our Youth Employment in Agriculture program, we launched this fund for agriculture. We've gotten people excited to see agriculture as a being sexy place to be, and not some drudgery. I want to do more, I want to do more here.

And for me, bringing my skills in finance and investing, being a previous banker and an investor in private equity, I was like, I should do something. I should start up a company that's now investing and supporting young people who are going into agriculture and specifically young people who are doing it from an agribusiness viewpoint, ____ promoted. How do we look at the entire system and support not just the smalholder farmers, but help them buying their produce, add value to it, and truly, truly become a player globally and tap into the \$1 trillion food market globally with processed food products.

So, my first investment was in a young woman who was buying pineapples and mangoes and drying the product and packaging it into a lovely, branded food snack. So, supported her and invested in her business, keyed into the vision and reinvested into her business. As time went by, I continued to do this and meet young entrepreneurs who had a passion and who were building and solving real problems—not just pie in the sky type—problems that I thought were going to be transformational for the continent, for Africa. And those were the sorts of entrepreneurs and sorts of businesses Agrolay started backing.

So, we moved away from just solely agriculture and then started doing fintech investments, we have an investment in the health sector, we have an investment in, in insurance. So, across the board ending up with about 14 startups. And from a holding investment standpoint, we'll have about 13 times multiple on invested capital. I have two exits so far—exits means that I was able to successfully come out of the business with a return, with a positive return. We also have the failures, folks who would just send an email or call and say, Hey Ada, can we talk? Oh, the markets have shift, we thought we were going to do this and we ran out of money and we don't know what to do anymore.

So, that's what Agrolay has been doing. It really is my angel investing, principle investing arm, so far I've deployed about \$380,000 over the last nearly ten years. And it really makes me feel great to have impacted the early-stage sector to impact entrepreneurship and young people in Africa in this way.

ORDU: You also serve on many boards of corporations, and in two of your own board committees you help to drive organizational transformation in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Could you elaborate on some of the steps you took to achieve this?

OSAKWE: I can think of two key things that I tend to do on these boards, especially in this specific area of DEI—diversity, equity, and inclusion that you spoke of, two key ways that I show up and am able to impact. The first is, is giving my time. And I can't overemphasize this enough, by the time I decide to join a board and I go through the long interview process and get in, and I actually usually during the interviews I'll say, I need you to use me. I'll tell the management, I'll tell the other board members who are maybe part of the process, I'll say, if I join this board, how would you use me? How would you use my skills, my talents, background, my experiences? Because I'm very selective on the boards that I decide to join. So, I would want to be able to use my time effectively.

So, when I do get on, it's not just for the sake of putting it on my resume, or the sake of sitting down and being able to give instructions to management or whatever. I really want to give my time. And that's what I did, what I've done when I got involved in the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives coming out of the George Floyd death and Black Lives Matter movement back in 2020. Most organizations, including the ones that I serve on boards, most global organizations were having a rethink of this DEI issue.

And so, being able to bring my perspective to the table, my time, to give extra time, not just board meetings, but being in these special committees, helping to recruit

consultants, reviewing documents, giving feedback. I think for me, that was just so important to me.

And then the second thing I would say apart from giving my time was that you really have to have a seat on the table if you want to move the needle on issues that are dear to one's heart. And DEI is important to me. I'm a woman, we typically have been marginalized. And I'm a Black woman who's worked globally and been on the receiving side of bias. So, being able to have a seat on the table, not only when they ask me, Hey, Ada, can you join this committee? But I also proactively would reach out to a board chair or management and say, have you thought about this? By the way, I would be very happy to support you, we could set up a committee and do this.

So, I am very proactive to ensure that I have a seat on the table.

ORDU: So, you mentioned the need for a seat at the table and yet up and down the world, but more importantly on our continent, there's such a shortage of women in boardrooms. How do we close this gender gap, based on your experience to date?

OSAKWE: No, indeed there is. We're still at only 25% of female representation at company boards. This is higher than the global average, which is at 17%. But I think what's telling is that we haven't really moved the needle in the last nearly, what, nearly ten years. We're only growing at 4%. It's only increased by only 4%, I should say, in the last ten years. So, is it that you can't find those women to sit on the board? So, we have a really long way to go to move from 25% to 50% to achieve parity with men around the table.

So, for me, I think of three things if I was to give a recommendation on closing this gender gap. The first would be around making sure there's the research and the data to back on this issue. If you do not have data, the analytics, the research, I just think we just would be picking at straws. You really have to have the research and the data to continuously show all of the progress that's been made, if at all, and also around why it's so important to have women on boards and why that diversity is important and how it actually improves the performance of companies.

The second recommendation, I would say, is making sure that we're providing opportunity for access. There are platforms today like the Boardroom Africa, or African Women on Board. These communities that have been set up are just amazing. They have been so intentional on bringing qualified women together. So, you say you can't find them? Oh, we'll help you find them. Our community has them. And you say you don't know where to drop your job description or your address for that board? Bring it on. We will share it with our network of women who we know are going to be amazing for your board.

And the third and final recommendation I would have, Aloysius, is making sure we have allies and specifically male allies. I just cannot believe—and I say it on panels, especially on March 8th, International Women's Day, when I'm invited to speak at these forums—and I'm sitting there and I look around the room from the stage and I'm like, women, women, women, women, women. I'm like, Why are we talking to ourselves? The next time you come, bring a man, bring your colleague from the office, a man, and bring him with you, he needs to be the one hearing this. We know

this. We know we're superwomen, we know the problems, we can call all the statistics out. But if we don't have male allies, right?

You know, Aloysius, I'm thinking of your podcast, this amazing podcast, and I was looking through the ... you have so many women that you've invited to speak. Right? You don't see that often, but from an initiative that's being driven by a man and an African man too. We need allies like you who truly understand what we women bring to the table. And it's the only way we can truly close the gender gap.

ORDU: But despite the progress, as you and I know, being made on gender parity by some African countries, our own country, Nigeria, remains a distant outlier. For example, we still have no elected governor of the 36 states, we have very few women in the House of Representatives, very few women in the Senate. Ada, what do we need to do to have more women in elected office in Nigeria?

OSAKWE: Ah, this one is a bit triggering because having been in government, having worked there for four years in the role I was in in the Agriculture Ministry, I truly appreciate the power of government, the influence of government, and why without a government and without the right policy we can't make meaningful progress in anything—the economy, the social sector—we can't.

So, it all begins with policy, our laws, the constitution, and then the entire mindset shift that needs to be done. My heart was breaking a few weeks ago when I saw some article that the police force in Nigeria, they have a regulation in their code—in their regulation, the police code, the Nigerian police regulation, they have something that says that an unmarried woman who becomes pregnant, an unmarried policewoman who works there who becomes pregnant, has to be dismissed. I could not believe this. This is some people sat around the table and crafted this and they put this forward and it was actually in place. How discriminatory is that?

And so, when you have these sorts of things, from a policy standpoint, from a law, from a code, that's where you have to start.

So, I think the core of it is just the framing of policies of the law and the mindset shift. And the mindset in many ways, to be honest, in Africa is a very patriarchal society. And then religion plays into it heavily. So, there are a lot of complexities.

But I just love that today you have a lot more organizations who are catching people young. Gen Z's amazing, Aloysius, this group of young people, they are go getters. They are using technology in interesting ways. They are holding governments accountable, they're using data, but using technology. So, organizations that exist today that are teaching young people, showing them what our constitution, what does it mean to run for elected office, joining a party. Bringing down the fees to even become one of the nominees; I think it's 100 million naira to even get the ticket of a party. Where would a young person get that, you know, or where would a woman in typically where would they go find that money? So, those are the elements that come into play that need to be fixed. But I'm trying to be hopeful that that we are moving in the right direction.

ORDU: In her brilliant essay in *Foresight Africa 2022*, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former president of Liberia, as you know, argued that women leaders must support other women in this quest for gender equity. How do you approach your role as a mentor to younger women?

OSAKWE: No, she's absolutely right. Women leaders must support other women. And this just shows you women who've achieved so much, they know the kind of support that's needed to get to those positions. You have to open those doors. I think it's a must.

So, how do I approach my role to mentor others? First of all, I just really want to be a true, true representation of what it means to be a woman who can truly thrive in an environment that maybe previously you had thought it was impossible. So, I really want to be that role model, that even if they don't know me, even if I'm not a mentor directly, it gladdens my heart when I see those messages that come in on my Instagram DM or somebody finds my number somehow and they tell me the influence I've had on them, even if it was from afar. So, I think that's the way I sort of approach it.

And then I think a second one I would quickly say, Aloysius, is that I really want to mean it, those words that Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said, women leaders must support other women, because I do sometimes feel it is lip service. And you do find those who sometimes just want to be self-serving and realize that they don't truly pull others along when they've broken that glass ceiling. I became a YGL at the World Economic Forum because someone like Dr. Okonjo-Iweala spoke up for me when she was on the board of the World Economic Forum. She didn't really know me, but she did that.

I've had such powerful female mentors, such wonderful people who truly have lived that. And so, I want to pay it forward in any way I can through the supporting the women I work with and just having this whole group of women that I sometimes just remember just being available and being accessible.

And I would say finally, one of the things that I know I get I've gotten feedback consistently on when it comes to this issue of supporting other women. And they'll say, Ada, you don't understand what it means to me that you willingly shared of yourself. You didn't keep your trade secrets as an entrepreneur of a business that you've been able to build. You truly willingly wanted to share and help. And that's how I approach it if I truly, genuinely want to continue being able to share and to help other women.

ORDU: In 2020, Ada, you are the convocation speaker for the Kellogg School of Management graduation, your alma mater. As I recall, you were the youngest person ever and the first African to be given that honor. What was that experience like and what did you learn from it?

OSAKWE: It was a full circle moment for me, Aloysius. Honestly to be recognized in that way, it wasn't even ten years since my graduation from Kellogg. I wasn't even 40 years old yet. Usually life begins at 40, as we say. So, to be in this space that such an amazing, recognized school, illustrious school, could recognize me in that way to come back and hear my words and share my experience with the graduating

class because it meant everything to me. It meant everything to me that I was the first African. It's an American school, and to be able to represent my continent in that way, it was mind blowing, I would say.

And being able to share as an entrepreneur, right? I had gone on to try to build something, I'm still building, right? I'm still on that journey you asked about at the start. So, being able to share of myself, even though my path hasn't been typical path that a business school student would see of a leader—I wasn't in investment banking, I wasn't in consulting, but I had this diverse path that was now, Hey, I'm building a juice company and a restaurant brand in a place called Nigeria. It meant everything to me.

Aloysius, finally I would say that it was in 2020 and the issues around George Floyd, had just been killed. We were still grappling with that. And so being able to speak to issues on racial injustice in my speech meant a lot to me as well. It was important that that was shared.

So, ultimately, that honor was everything and to have people, other Africans, fellow alumni, for them to share with me the pride that they have seeing me deliver the convocation speech was beautiful.

ORDU: Very much so. So, looking ahead, Ada, to the future, what's next for you?

OSAKWE: Oh, I still am on that journey, Aloysius. I just became a mother, and it's been one of the most glorious experiences in my life. Life changing.

ORDU: Congratulations.

OSAKWE: Thank you very much. I'm still grappling with that change in a good way, I would say. And so for me, the future is really me being the best mom I can be and raising my daughter to be someone who is going to influence the world in a positive way. But from a business standpoint and just career and my life in general, very exciting things that we are doing to truly transform the food industry in Nigeria, on the continent, and taking Africa to the rest of the world.

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ORDU: Ada, it has been a wonderful, wonderful pleasure speaking with you. Thank you very much for joining me in this conversation.

OSAKWE: Such an honor to have this conversation with you. Thank you so much, Aloysius.

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ORDU: I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, and this has been Foresight Africa. To learn more about what you just heard today, you can find this episode online at Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast.

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Fred Dews, producer; Nicole Ntunigre and Sakina Djantchiemo, associate producers; and Gastón Reboredo, audio engineer.

The show's art was designed by Shavanthi Mendis based on the concept by the creative from Blossom. Additional support for this podcast comes from my colleagues at Brookings Global and the Office of Communications at Brookings.