

Forging an era of collaboration between Nigeria and South Africa

By [Nonye Mpho Omotola](#)

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With a South African mother and Nigerian father, I am in the fortunate position of being exposed to the best of both countries and cultures. As such, I can clearly envision the benefits of the two nations coming together and working towards shared common goals.



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South Africa and Nigeria each have rich cultures and a wealth of human talent, skills and resources. And both can only grow stronger and progress at a faster rate should these diverse nations join to work towards mutual goals. The aim should be to leverage off each other's strengths to benefit the African continent, instead of being threatened or being unduly critical of each other.

A new era of collaboration and integration

The time has come to shed the straight-jackets of the past that are restricting forward-focused movement and collaboration of these two influential African countries. It's long overdue for a major and widespread change of perspective – where Nigeria and South Africa view each other as African partners within the global community.

This is not merely an aspirational view, but something that can start happening quite quickly and tangibly once both countries are open to driving a new era of collaboration and integration. This will kick off efforts to understanding the different cultural values, skills, assets, economic value and other positive elements by both countries.

Some of the ways that these objectives can be practically achieved include the following:

- Utilise the existing Binational Commission (comprising members from different age groups, genders, social and cultural backgrounds, regions and viewpoints) to its full potential.
- Leverage off the strength of African diaspora for knowledge and understanding of the local environments in both Nigeria and South Africa.
- Build a framework for exchange of key messaging and success stories between the two countries showcasing positive aspects and achievements.
- Organise inter-cultural exchange programmes, binational roadshows and events that include showcasing the music, food, talent, traditions and cultures of both countries.
- Establish journalist academies in both Nigeria and South Africa that facilitate skills and knowledge exchanges. For example, by taking a group of journalists from South Africa to Nigeria (and vice versa), and exposing them to business, public and lifestyle sectors.
- Don't discriminate on grounds of nationality – make full use of skilled migrant labour. Company policies may have to be reviewed to be more inclusive.
- From a government perspective, improve the visa application processes and speed up work permit approvals.
- Both countries should leverage off each other's strengths in terms of professional skills, infrastructure, expertise in different sectors and natural resources.
- Innovation hubs should be set up (e.g. Nigeria's Computer Village) and part or all proceeds should be invested in youth and knowledge development initiatives (such as digital skills upliftment projects by Mark Zuckerberg and Google in Nigeria).
- Co-ordinate roadshows spotlighting the historic links between Nigeria and South Africa. This will enlighten the inhabitants of each country on the roles played by the other country in shaping their landscape (e.g. highlighting the financial and political support provided by Nigeria to South Africa in the fight against apartheid).
- Private sector collaboration (e.g. combining South Africa's great business infrastructure and Nigeria's skills optimally for maximum effect).

While there may be many challenges to overcome, with a united view and joint concerted effort by both countries, this vision is certainly attainable. It comes down to changing perceptions now and starting this progressive journey as soon as possible. The vast opportunities that exist in such a partnership await. And I, for one, simply cannot wait to see what's in store for Africa soon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nonye Mpho Orotola is the Managing Director of Africa Communications Media Group based in Johannesburg. She has over 20 years of strategic brand experience gained in the UK, South Africa, and Nigeria, and was awarded the Brand Leadership Award at the World Brand Congress in Mumbai, India for her professional and strategic excellence. She is a member of several professional institutions and has gained extensive work experience within the global PR, branding, and advertising spheres. Nonye is particularly driven by socio-impact initiatives and the role of effective communications in Africa.

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