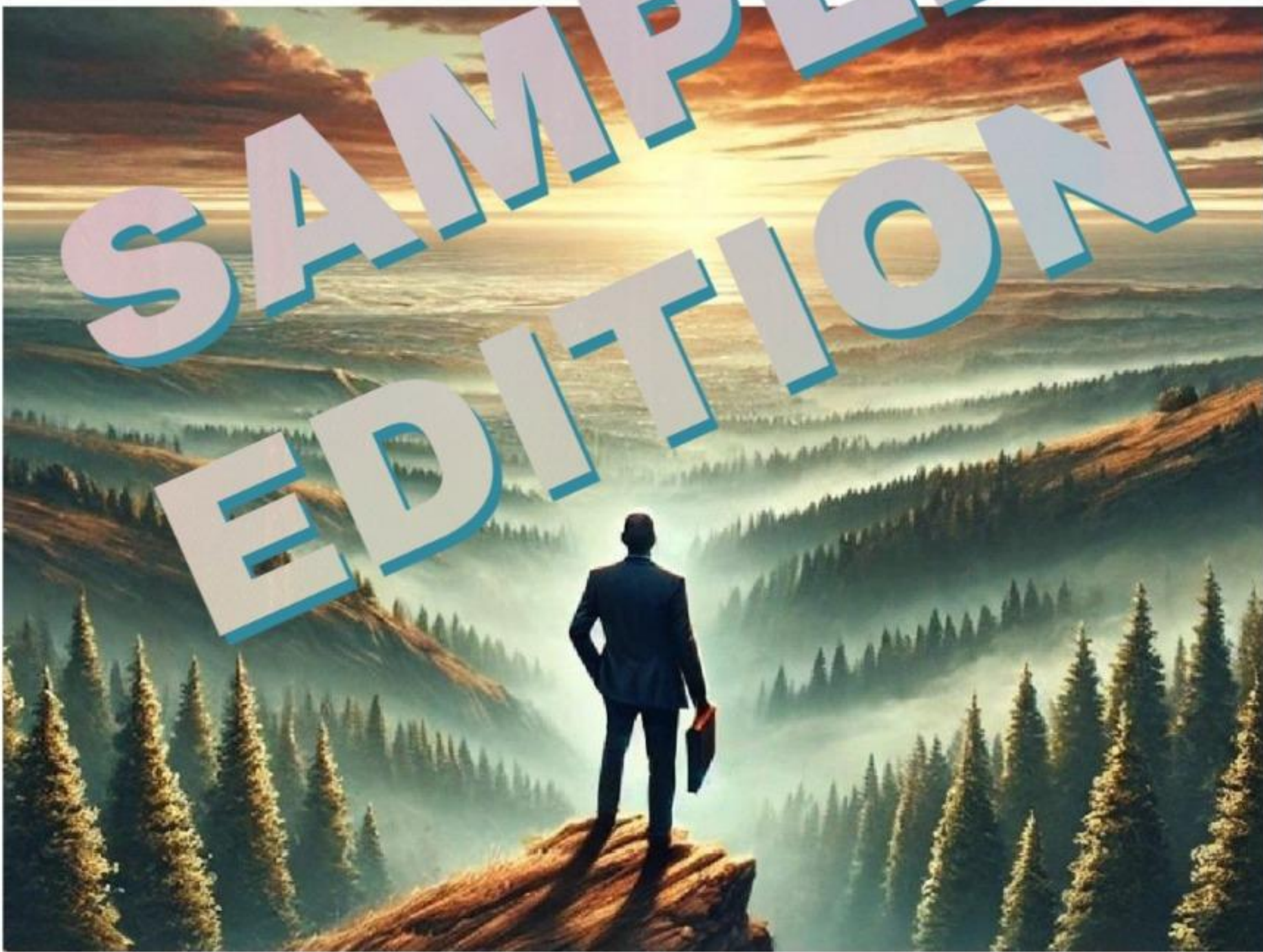


EMBRACE THE JOURNEY

Unlocking Potential Through Growth,
Character, and Positivity



CYRIL AWERE

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**This book is dedicated to my wife,
Akosua, and my sons, Kwesi and
Issac, and (in memoriam) my
brother, Alex Awere.**

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Foreword

I grew up in Canada, but some of my earliest and deepest ideas about purpose, resilience, and vision came from Africa. They came from stories told around the dinner table: stories about my uncle, Neil White, who dedicated his life to justice and equality in post-apartheid South Africa. He wasn't a politician or a public figure; he was a doctor—a quiet man with fierce conviction—who used his medical expertise to fight for the rights of thousands of miners suffering from silicosis and tuberculosis—diseases caused by decades of unsafe working conditions deep underground.

Neil wasn't content to just treat symptoms. His life mission was to challenge a broken system. He gathered data, checked X-rays by hand late into the night, and helped miners—specifically Black miners—receive the compensation and respect they deserved. He proved that science could be an instrument of justice, and he fought to rewrite the very legislation that had allowed these injustices to persist.

His life showed me what it looks like to follow your inner compass: to serve something greater than yourself with humility and humanity. It was his approach to work and life, and the

impact he had on others, that inspired me to do the work I do now.

When the pandemic hit, I launched a global leadership programme designed to connect professionals from around the world with grassroots challenges in vulnerable communities. It was a way to bring people out of their comfort zones and into their purpose—and to connect them with others they might never otherwise have had the chance to meet.

Cyril was part of the very first cohort. From the beginning, he stood out. He jumped in headfirst, helping design a tangible, income-generating solution for communities in Syria and Iraq that had been devastated by human rights violations. He didn't hold back: he brought his full self—his skills, compassion, curiosity, and commitment.

I felt an immediate connection to him. His warmth, dedication, and passion echoed a spirit of perspective and possibility I've always associated with my family in South Africa: a different context, a different moment in time—but the same belief that leadership is not about titles; it's about service, about action, about real impact, and about leading with character even when no one is watching.

Cyril's book could not come at a more important time.

Africa's future lies in the hands of its young people—its bold thinkers, dreamers, and doers. But potential alone isn't enough. We need leadership rooted in values, resilience, and growth. We need people willing to stand for something and to walk paths where no trail yet exists.

This book is a gift. Drawing from Cyril's experience and insight into organisational culture across the world—from Africa to the UK—he shows just how critical it is in shaping effective, profitable, and human-centred businesses: places where people feel connected, inspired, and empowered to do their best work.

As the host of the Believe Africa Podcast, Cyril continues this mission by fostering a mindset of excellence, resilience, and purpose in young Africans. Through candid conversations with entrepreneurs, creatives, and thought leaders, he's collected and now curated a beautiful selection of stories—each one relatable, each one carrying a powerful message, a fresh insight, and clear action steps to help readers drive their lives in a similarly mission-driven direction.

Cyril Awere

And even though each story is unique, Cyril manages to invite readers into a shared journey—one that embraces setbacks as much as success and champions the growth that comes from showing up as your full self.

“No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come,” says the African proverb. Cyril’s work—and this book—shines a light toward that day.

May it inspire you to follow your own compass, to lead with purpose, and to help shape the future Africa—and the world—so urgently needs.

Philippa White

Founder and CEO, TIE Leadership

Author, *Return on Humanity: Leadership Lessons
from All Corners of the World*

Embrace the Journey

“Full of beautifully told stories and timeless lessons.”

René Carayol

A promotional banner for René Carayol MBE. The background is bright yellow. On the left, the text 'RENÉ CARAYOL MBE' is in large, bold, black letters. Below it, in smaller black text, are 'LEADERSHIP KEYNOTE SPEAKER', 'EXECUTIVE COACH', and 'BESTSELLING AUTHOR'. At the bottom left, a black box contains the text 'SUBSCRIBE TO MY DAILY LEADERSHIP TIPS' in white. On the right, there is a black and white portrait of René Carayol, a smiling man in a suit. To the right of the portrait, contact information is listed: a phone icon with '+44 (0)7831 166083', an email icon with 'rene@carayol.com', a globe icon with 'www.carayol.com', and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn with the handle '@renecarayol'.

“A treasure trove of wisdom... practical and inspiring.”

Tunji Akintokun, MBE FCL

A promotional banner for Tunji Akintokun MBE. The banner has a black border. At the top, the text 'Living, Loving, Learning & Leaving a Legacy' is written in a cursive font. Below this, on the left, is 'Tunji Akintokun MBE' in bold black text. Underneath that is 'M: +44 7808 784220' and 'e: ade@akintokun.com'. In the center, there is a green logo of a stylized leaf with the text 'ILESHA CHARITABLE TRUST' below it. On the right, there is a blue logo with the text 'aiaa' and 'aspire2achieve' below it.

“Cyril shows us how to lead with heart and humanity.”

**Philippa White, Founder & CEO, TIE
Leadership**

**Author of *Return on Humanity: Leadership
lessons from all corners of the world.***

To The Reader

As you hold this book in your hands, you are embarking on a journey into the essence of leadership—a concept that is more than a job title, a position, or a set of skills. True leadership is a way of being, a way of serving, and a way of inspiring those around us to strive for excellence, even in the face of adversity. Today, our world is in desperate need of leaders who are rooted in integrity, compassion, and resilience. This is especially true for the young people who are stepping into roles that will shape the future of Africa and, indeed, the world.

Africa is a continent brimming with potential—rich in culture, diversity, resources, and, most importantly, its people, particularly the youth. In a few decades, Africa will have the largest and youngest population in the world. Therefore, they represent the future and are the present drivers of change. With the right leadership behaviours, they hold the power to redefine what Africa can be. Leadership that is authentic, responsible, and inclusive can break barriers, dismantle corruption, and foster a new era of innovation, peace, and sustainable development. But to achieve this, we must nurture these qualities early on.

Leadership is not about dictating the way forward; it's about guiding with purpose, listening to the needs of the people, and being willing to evolve. It requires young people to develop a strong moral compass, to lead by example, and to be driven by values that elevate themselves and their communities. In Africa, where many countries are still navigating the challenges of post-colonial legacies, economic inequality, and political instability, young leaders must rise above the status quo. They must dare to be different—to stand for justice, fairness, and progress.

But this is not a call to action for Africa alone. The leadership behaviours we cultivate today among the youth will ripple across the globe. In a world interconnected by technology, ideas, and shared challenges like climate change and global inequality, the influence of African youth leaders will extend far beyond their local communities. True leadership, grounded in empathy and forward-thinking, is what the world needs to tackle these pressing global issues.

As you read through this book, I encourage you to reflect on what it means to lead in your context. Whether you are an emerging leader yourself or someone looking to inspire others, remember that leadership is not confined to grand gestures or role titles. It is found in the small, consistent actions that demonstrate courage, honesty, and commitment to the

greater good. Every decision you make, every challenge you face with integrity, brings you one step closer to becoming the leader the world needs.

My interest in organisational culture began when I joined Nokia Ghana (formally Alcatel-Lucent) as a senior manager based in Accra, Ghana, supporting the delivery of networking infrastructure projects for Telecel Ghana (formally Vodafone Ghana). I witnessed firsthand how organisational culture can play a crucial role in shaping Africa's economic and social future by driving productivity, innovation, and ethical business practices.

A strong, values-driven culture fosters trust, accountability, and inclusivity—key ingredients for sustainable growth across all industries. By promoting a growth mindset, strong character, and a positive attitude, organisations can empower local talent, attract investment, and enhance economic resilience.

Furthermore, a positive workplace culture can lead to job creation, improved employee well-being, and greater efficiency, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction and broader socioeconomic development across the continent.

Africa's future is bright, and the positive impact of strong leadership will uplift the continent and contribute to a more just and equitable world.

Embrace the Journey

Together, through true leadership behaviours,
we can turn today's potential into tomorrow's
reality.

How To Read This Book

The true value of this book does not just lie in the words you read, but in how you apply the lessons to your life and leadership journey. As the saying goes, ‘action speaks louder than words’. To get the most out of it, approach each chapter with an open mind, ready to reflect on your own experiences. Take notes on the insights that resonate with you and think about how they relate to your current role or aspirations as a leader.

As you absorb the knowledge, challenge yourself to take immediate action. Start with small steps—whether it’s leading by example, mentoring a peer, or creating positive change in your community.

Leadership is not solely about personal success, professional accolades, or accumulating material possessions, but about uplifting those around you. By applying what you learn here to both your life and the lives of others, you’ll create lasting, positive outcomes that ripple beyond yourself.

Remember, the best leaders lead with purpose, and this book is your guide to finding that purpose and using it to make a difference.

Introduction

This sample edition of *"Embrace the Journey: Stories to Unlock Your Potential,"* is a guide designed to help you harness the power of a growth mindset, develop a strong character, and cultivate a positive attitude. In this book, based on characters from different parts of Africa, we will explore 4 of the 11 inspiring stories, and provide 1 of the key actionable steps that will empower you to live a more fulfilling and impactful life. Let's embark on this journey together—learning to overcome challenges, build inner strength, and radiate positivity.

This sample edition contains the following excerpts:

- **Section 1.1:** The Power of 'Yet' – Abena's story: From doubt to discovery
- **Section 1.2:** The Making of a Champion – Yemisi's powerful resilience
- **Section 2.1:** The Honest Merchant – Masego's integrity yields dividends
- **Section 2.3:** Compassion in Action – Choosing compassion over convention

Part 1:

Embracing a Growth Mindset

Section 1.1:

The Power of "Yet"

*"Little by little, the bird builds its nest."
– Nigerian Proverb*

Story: Abena's Artistic Journey: The Power of "Yet"

Abená used to say, “I am not creative enough”. That was before she discovered the power of the word yet. When Abena, a Ghanaian high school student, was given a paint brush for the first time she froze. Her mind echoed familiar fears: “What if I fail?” But her mentor reminded her, “You’re not there... yet.” The chapter unpacks how a growth mindset can turn failure into fuel—and how one word can unlock possibility.

A Call to Action

- **Adopt the Language of Growth:**
Replace "I can't" with "I can't yet." This simple shift in language can change your perspective and open possibilities for growth and improvement.

Section 1.2:

Yemisi's Journey to Greatness

"Success is a ladder that cannot be climbed with your hands in your pockets."
— African Proverb

Story: The Making of a Champion: Yemisi's Journey to Greatness

Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Yemisi had a singular dream from a young age: to become a professional sprinter. Yemisi's feet pounded the dusty Lagos track as the sun rose behind her—a young girl chasing more than just speed. What began as a childhood dream to become a sprinter soon became a test of endurance, resilience, and sheer determination. Time and again she lost races, but instead of giving up, she trained harder.

With every early morning run and every drop of sweat, Yemisi wasn't just building muscle—she was shaping her mindset. Guided by a coach who believed in effort over talent, she began to rise. Her story reminds us: greatness isn't born, it's earned—one stride at a time.

A Call to Action

Yemisi's story is a powerful example of how effort and persistence can transform potential into achievement. Here are some ways to apply these principles to your own life:

- **Commit to Hard Work:** Understand that talent alone is not enough. Success requires continuous hard work, dedication and a willingness to push through challenges.

Embrace the Journey

Part 2:

Developing a Strong Character

Section 2.1:

Integrity & Honesty

"A man of integrity speaks for himself, a man of dishonour needs a lawyer."
– Ethiopian Proverb

Story: The Honest Merchant

Johannesburg's marketplace was a vibrant hub of activity, where merchants and customers from all walks of life gathered daily. Amidst the colourful stalls and the cacophony of haggling voices, one merchant stood out for his unwavering reputation. Masego, a humbled merchant believed that doing the right thing, even when unnoticed was the foundation of lasting success. When faced with a moment that could have gone unseen,

being a customer's overpayment, he chose honesty over profit. This simple act sent a ripple effect of trust, inspiring a community to value character over convenience. Masego's story reminds us that transformation does not begin with grand gestures, but with everyday decisions that are grounded in integrity and the truth.

Call to Action

Masego's story is a powerful reminder that integrity is the foundation of trust and strong character. Here are some ways to apply these principles in your own life:

- **Practise Honesty:** Always tell the truth, even when it's difficult. Honesty builds trust and respect.

Section 2.3:

Compassion

"Love, like rain, does not choose the grass on which it falls."

– South African Proverb

Story: Compassion in Action: The Story of Dr. Rajae Ghanimi

Dr. Rajae Ghanimi was well-known in her community for her empathetic approach to medicine. Every morning, she arrived at her clinic early, greeted her staff with a warm smile, and prepared for a day of seeing patients.

Her clinic, located in a busy urban area of Casablanca, served a diverse population, many of whom were struggling with socio-economic challenges. Despite the high volume of patients

and the often-overwhelming workload, Dr. Ghanimi never allowed the pressures of her job to diminish her compassionate demeanour.

Call to Action

Inspired by Dr. Ghanimi's story, here are some ways to incorporate empathy and compassion into your daily life:

- **Offer Help:** Look for opportunities to help others, even in small ways. Acts of kindness can have a lasting impact.

What Are the Next Steps?

Congratulations on completing your reading of this sample of the book! Now that you've absorbed its lessons, the next step is to put them into practice. Take time to reflect on the key insights and consider how you can implement them in your daily life. Start by identifying specific areas where these ideas apply—whether in your personal leadership style, how you engage with others, or the causes you care about.

This is just the beginning. The full book includes the following:

- 10 story-rich and inspiring chapters
- Reflective questions and activities
- A leadership workbook for everyday growth
- Insights from African changemakers

👉 Click [here](#) to order the full book and step into your purpose

Acknowledgements

Over the past few years, I have deliberated about writing this book especially after my experience of living and working in Africa over several years. That experience—combined with meaningful conversations with my family and friends—gave me the impetus to write this book, with the hope of helping to changing the narrative.

In early 2024, when I started the *BelieveAfrica* podcast, my interactions with various guests further deepened my understanding of the challenges and opportunities across the African continent. I am very grateful to all the guests who have participated in the *BelieveAfrica* podcast, and I hope you find the conversations equally enlightening.

I am especially thankful for the continued support and inspiration from my good friend and business partner, Farid Yandouz, and his family. They came up with the design for book cover, which has since been endorsed by many. My podcast host, Adrain Daniel, was also instrumental in the successful launch of the *BelieveAfrica* podcast and inspired me to explore writing a book on this important topic of instilling belief in young Africans.

Cyril Awere

I have been truly blessed to have friends and family who have offered unwavering moral support and valuable insights into how this book can serve as a catalyst for change. While I cannot possibly name everyone here, you know who you are—and I am immensely grateful to each and every one of you.

Embrace the Journey

Book Endorsers

Philippa White
Rene Carayol
Tunji Akintokun

About The Author

Cyril Awere is a seasoned professional with a robust background in project and programme management and business coaching, bringing a wealth of experience and insight to his role as the host of the *BelieveAfrica* podcast. With a career spanning over three decades, Cyril has held key positions across leading institutions, where he has honed his expertise in project management, strategy, business agility, and team development. His professional journey is marked by a commitment to excellence, innovation, and the empowerment of young Africans.

As the host of the *BelieveAfrica* podcast, Cyril leverages his extensive knowledge and passion for personal growth to inspire and guide his audience. Through engaging conversations with thought leaders, entrepreneurs, and changemakers, he explores the challenges and opportunities that define the African experience. His ability to connect meaningfully with both guests and listeners has made the podcast a valuable platform for those seeking to unlock their potential and make a positive impact in their communities.

Cyril's dedication to uplifting the next generation of African leaders is at the heart of his work. He believes in the power of

storytelling to inspire change, and through
Embrace the Journey: Stories to Unlock Your Potential,
he continues to encourage others to pursue
their dreams with confidence and
determination.

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