



THE CONVERGENCE

VOL. 1

POWER | CAPACITY | POLITICS

DECEMBER 2018



THE CONVERGENCE IS GOING TO CHANGE NIGERIAN POLITICS

IT'S ABOUT TIME

THE NOT TOO YOUNG TO RUN MOVEMENT AND THE STRIVE FOR A YOUTH-LED AFRICA





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COVER

The Convergence 1.0 was the first of its kind. To drive pro-active participation and interstate collaboration in Nigeria, YIAGA AFRICA mobilized 400 youth candidates to converge in the Federal Capital Territory for a three-day event themed, *The Convergence: Power, Capacity and Politics*. The youth candidates who were empowered to run by the Not Too Young to Run Act driven by YIAGA AFRICA, were equipped with the required knowledge, skills and ideas to actualize their political ambitions.

TEAM

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The 3-day event of 400 youth candidates countrywide, signals a major step forward in changing the system of politics in Nigeria.

3 SPOTLIGHT

A 3-day event of 400 youth candidates countrywide, in Nigeria.



5 YOUTHS

Syndicate sessions with facilitators and other resource persons drawn from the academia, CSO's and NGO's.



13 INTERVIEWS

Views from Young Political Candidates of The Convergence 2018



FOR YOUNG PERSONS IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

HIGHLIGHT OF PRESENTATIONS

Each of the three days came with various presentations, discourses and interactions, deployed Ted-style sessions, master-classes, round-tables, audio-visual aids and even a movie screening.

Here are some excerpts from the 3-day event:



↓ **Debbie Palmer, DFID, Head of Office**

We celebrated hard and loud when the not too young to run bill was signed into law. You are the people who will lead the way. Over the next episode decades, we would see a younger crop of leaders as Nigeria is set to be the third largest nation on earth in 2050, according to projections.

The key to Nigerias future will be the balance between economic growth and population growth. But it's difficult when revenues are very low. The Country needs to make sure we've got healthy production for those going into the work force. I urge you to focus on the real issues that matter in this nation because that will be the health of Nigeria going forward. You need to be able to tell people what you stand for so that they believe in you.

This time now for all of you is about learning your craft, learning what this new world looks like. It's not just your right to stand for elections, but it's also your responsibility. so you need to work out what you stand for.



↓ **Hon. Francesca Oteng Mensah | MP Ghana**

"I entered parliament at the age of 23, I'm currently 25. In Ghana, we also have the problem where most of those in the government are from the older generation. I'm also from the two minority groups, I'm a woman and I'm a youth.

When it comes to branding, we all have our unique strengths. There is something unique about the young ones, that is our energy and our strength.

Make use of your energy; it can be your strength so utilise that. On election day, you might be confronted with certain promises. Know your electoral laws, if you don't know this, then probably, you might not go far."



↓ **W. Stuart Symington | US Amb. to Nigeria**

→ "The greatest question before all of you were born was will nigeria stand as a country? You have it in your power to help each other first, and then to help your nation. Power is about something you make and something you share. literally, there is no power without sharing it; it has no voice, it has no image.

The challenge now is not to win the election, the challenge is to change democracy in Nigeria forever. The first challenge is to work hand-in-hand man and woman the second is to create opportunities for all.

The challenge is not just about promising, the challenge is finding out 'how can you as a class of 2019 work together to find out what every Nigerian wants and help them?' Recognize that they have to do more together as a people. In a true democracy, it is the people who lead.



↓ **Boniface Mwangi | Photojournalist, Politician & Activist, Kenya.**

"The most key thing you need for a campaign is not even money its people skills. You need people to help you. You need campaign posters and campaign vehicles people can give you those things. The community is capable of supporting your campaign, don't underestimate them, have no shame to ask for support because the money is not going to your house.

When I knew I was willing to die for my country, was when I realised in my silence, I wasn't safe, I wasn't good. In my silence, I was suffering. Your silence is not going to protect you. In my silence, I was still a victim, I decided to speak. Silence does not make you a good person, it makes you a coward.

There's a quote by Fela Kuti that says 'My people are scared of the air around them, they always have an excuse not to fight for freedom'. You can reclaim this country with courage. But cowardice would not allow you to speak. Fear is actually taught; no one was born with fear in him or her."



↓ **Hon. Joanah Mamombe, | MP Zimbabwe**

"In Zimbabwe, we have this mobile platform where people can donate money. My election team and I took advantage of Zimbabweans in the diaspora and mobilized funds through one contact person in each and every country in the diaspora. We did door-to-door fund raising too. Let your constituents contribute, let them have a feel of who they are going to vote for. Also, letters are personal. I had 35,000 letters written and signed and delivered to every suburb in my constituency. The letter had who Joanah is, my manifesto, why people needed to go and vote for me. I made the letter very personal, as if I was speaking directly to them."



A Cross Section of Youth Candidates Queuing into The Convergence Hall

The brilliance of The Convergence was first made obvious by the music that played in the background as youth candidates arrived at the conference hall at Yar'adua centre in Abuja. This musical piece was similar to the soundtrack that accompanies a movie scene where characters are preparing for battle. It was the perfect springboard for the first edition of The Convergence to ceremoniously begin. "The Convergence: Power, Capacity Politics" is the start of a hope-laden journey for civil societal organizations and world leaders to galvanize 400 youth candidates, empowered to run by the Not Too Young to Run Act, to reverse the tide of Nigeria's current political and social landscape.

For decades, Nigerians have carried the impossible burden of fixing a system that has tended to frustrate, punish and ignore them. "We will fight corruption!" has been the rallying cry for every political aspirant from the coup days to present day democratic Nigeria, however those who were elected in office became victims of the vice they stood against. Even more frustrating is that the leaders who occupy positions in Government are largely



Bella Anne Ndubuisi, Board Member YIAGA AFRICA, and Host of The Convergence

THE CONVERGENCE

Is Going To Change Nigerian Politics. It's About Time.



those who have been involved in politics from the beginning. The ideals and values that members of government perpetuated then are in full effect today. As such, the situation of the country has not changed much. Change has never been more imperative. For

so long we have struggled as a people to answer the leadership question. Effective leadership is one of the key indicators for stronger communities and a civil society.

A new crop of leaders needs to be introduced. Open minded individuals not disturbed by inconsequentialities, such



Youth Candidates of The Convergence

as ethnic or religious loyalties, over the national common good. Politics should be inclusive of the young and vibrant people. Leaders of the newly independent Nigeria were exciting because they were young, educated radicals who were willing to give their lives for and serve their country.



Volunteers at The Convergence

They inspired their followers. Proper democratic processes must be practiced and authorities should be disintegrated to power because in a true democracy, power belongs to the people.

It is to this end that YIAGA AFRICA is still furthering the Not Too Young To Run movement even after the success of the Not Too Young To Run Act, which was signed into law on May 31st 2018. To ensure that what is now written in the constitution, will be practiced in the spirit, we mobilized 400 youth candidates from the 91 registered political parties vying for different positions in the 2019 general elections, to converge in the Federal Capital Territory for a three-day event themed, The Convergence: Power, Capacity and Politics. The Convergence 0.1 was the first of its kind. Nearly every speaker that mounted the stage highlighted the fact that this was the first time in the history of Nigeria that a non-partisan organization, will bring 400 candidates from across the country to speak about issues and equip them with lectures and tools on running for elections.

All lectures at The Convergence made candidates



A Volunteer Tagging Officials



Senior Program Officer, Ibrahim Faruk (Centre) with Chanele TV Crew

understand that there was no need to abide by the rules of any Machiavellian political system, when they can build “a new model that renders the old one obsolete,” as Tunji Lardner of WAGONET said during his speech. We also joined forces with bodies in Nigeria, within and outside Africa to ensure that young candidates became conversant with cutting-edge ideas and global best practices on election campaigns.

With speeches and master classes by young delegates from Kenya (Boniface Mwangi), Ghana (Francesca Oteng Mensah), and Zimbabwe (Joanna Mamombe), and the intellectual dexterity of experienced experts including senior officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission, stakeholders in the electoral realm, activists, and the diplomatic corps (including the Ambassador of US to Nigeria, His Excellency W. Stuart Symington, who delivered the closing keynote address), we made the young candidates aware that young people had fought a similar battle of winning elections against old political warhorses, and they won. It was a powerful warning that wealth; status and a record of long seating in positions of power were no longer enough to win elections in Nigeria.

The Not Too Young To Run movement has established itself as the dominant influence on the democratic policy of Nigeria’s young progressive wing. Just

as it has changed political activism from a movement of passive grieving youths, to an active movement led by youths, The Convergence is part of the fight for the political movement to go beyond just hoping for change, to effecting actual change through proactive participation and interstate collaboration, in order to cause tangible growth in our prevailing reality.



Cynthia Mbamalu, YIAGA AFRICA Programs Manager



Young Political Candidates Queuing into The Convergence Hall

The Not Too Young To Run Movement

And The Strive For A Youth-Led Africa

The first Nigerians the world was exposed to—Jaja Wachukwu (the first speaker of the house, first foreign affairs minister, and first ambassador to the UN), Funmi Ransome Kuti (the founder of Nigerian Women’s Union, and the first Nigerian woman to drive a car), and Adeleke Adedoyin (a Prince, Activist and Barrister)—wanted self-government, civil rights, and equal rights. They wanted to master their own destiny. They devised means of empowering their people, and they collaborated to find solutions to their problems. But it was not only Nigerians struggling for freedom; it was Africans all over Africa. Through the Pan-African Congress, opinion leaders and political activists across Africa and in the African diaspora converged to deliberate on issues affecting the indigenous people of their country.

The congress marked a turning point in Pan-Africanism, from a passive to an

active movement; in 1945, the main resolution of the fifth Pan-African Congress spun the decolonization effort of Africa. By the 1950’s, it was clear to the colonial masters that Africans will no longer tolerate inequality in their own countries. In this way, the Not Too Young To Run movement appears to be comparable to the Pan-African movement of the 50s. The NTYTR movement intends to make Nigeria’s democracy and governance more inclusive of young people, just as the Pan-African Congress made democracy and governance in African countries to be more inclusive of the indigenous people.

Some of the opinion leaders and political activists, who attended the Pan-African Congress, went on to lead their country: Kwaame Nkrumah became the first prime minister and president of Ghana, Obafemi Awolowo, the first premier of the Western Region and later federal commissioner for finance, and vice chairman of the Federal Executive Council during the Civil War,



Samuel Markus Wina, Young Political Candidate, Gombe State House of Assembly



Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, Lagos West Senatorial Candidate



Hon. Francesca Oteng Mensah, Member of Parliament, Ghana



Zainab Suleiman Umar, State House of Assembly Candidate, Kano



Hon. Tony Nwulu, Member, House of Reps, and Sponsor Not Too Young To Run Bill



Not Too Young Too Run Strategy Team Members and Key Guests with US Ambassador to Nigeria



Tunji Lardner, Executive Director, WANGONeT



Martins Hile, Co-founder, 234 Crowdfunding



Udo Jude Ilo, Country Officer, OSIWA

Dennis Osadebay premiered the now defunct mid western region of Nigeria, which now comprises Edo and Delta state, and Jomo Kenyatta became the first president of Kenya. This says a lot about a few things that had become obvious at the end of the maiden edition of The Convergence.

Through the NTYTR movement, The Convergence marked a significant advancement in the participation of countries in the Pan-African cause. Boniface Mwangi, Francesca Oteng-Mensah, Joanna Mamombe—all were outstanding delegates at the three-day event. Seen in foresight, The Convergence has won the reputation of a pacemaker for a collaborative fight for youths to lead Africa... again.

When these three delegates from Kenya, Ghana and Zimbabwe gave their respective speeches and workshops, it was clear to



Young Political Candidates at The Convergence

these parties to do their own kind of politics. Burn that playing field to the ground and set up a new system. For you to change Nigeria, you need to ensure that you break that system. But change is not an

event; change is a process. It is a marathon and when you reach the end of that marathon, you pass the baton,” Boniface Mwangi fired as he showed powerful video documentaries and images of his campaign during his candidature for the 2016 Kenyan Parliamentary elections. In Mwangi, the audience already saw a legendary legislator, a sophisticated strategist, a voice for the voiceless, a defender of the disenfranchised, a powerful, profound, prophetic, principled public servant.

Lectures like Mwangi’s, provided further evidence of the need for a youth-led Africa and a platform like The Convergence, where young candidates are exposed to values of responsible, responsive, patriotic and competent leadership—which is what a diverse African country like Nigeria needs for National development.



Francesca Oteng Mensah, Samson Itodo, Ibraheem Sanusi, Boniface Mwangi (Left to Right)

the 400 youth candidates of Nigeria that we were all collectively fighting a similar battle: to demand an end to the lack of political justice, bad governance and gerrymandering by old politicians, while carrying forward the broad struggle against imperialism, for human rights, and for equality of economic opportunity.

The mood in the conference hall was buoyant as Boniface Mwangi spoke. Praise for his career, set off by a rousing, referencing speech, was effusive. “The godfather set up



Young Political Candidates at The Convergence

ADDRESSING THE DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF **WOMEN IN NIGERIAN POLITICS**



Female Political Candidates at The Convergence

It is not news that there are very few female politicians in Nigeria. The number of young female candidates in the 2015 general elections was below 20%, and it is even lower in the 2019 general elections. At The Convergence, we could count the number of women in the conference hall on our fingertips. It is a fair inference that the statistics will remain roughly the same in the next four years—at least, until the succeeding general elections in 2023. This is also because even the few female candidates running for seats in the State houses of assembly and National Assembly in the 2019 general elections, have many factors working against them to win.

We dedicated a session to address these factors in light of the percentage of male to female candidates running for the 2019 elections.

“For Senatorial Candidates we have 87.4% male candidates and 12.6% female candidates. For House of Reps candidates, we have just 12.3% female candidates,” Ebere Efundu, from the Women in Politics Forum said during her presentation to the 400 youth candidates. She enlightened the candidates on how the devastating problem of restraining women in politics has been marked by lack of internal party democracy (intimidation,



A Meeting with Female Political Candidates at The Convergence

imposition, outright disqualification, sex for ticket), patriarchal society, family responsibilities, less access to information, lack of political experience, violence, and religion. Efundu pressed on, “Whether we like it or not, if we do not allow half of our population to participate in government, we will always be standing on one leg,” admonishing the audience against the evils of not including the marginalized in politics.

We have seen overtime that there is no set definition of leadership, that it is not inherently masculine, nor is it exclusively feminine; that leadership in politics is inclusive of everyone. The survival of democracy in any country depends on its ability to capture all sectors of society. Since Nigeria’s existence, there has been no female candidate elected into the office of the senate president, governor, vice president, talk less of the presidential seat. Till today, some of the youth candidates are still pessimistic about the prospect of a woman leading such high political posts in the country. It reveals how far we need to go in changing and pushing the political narrative that women can be just as competent as any man is in the country.

The classification of women in parliament in Nigeria is just 6.5%. Whereas, in Namibia it is 48%; South Africa, 42.4%; Senegal, 41.8%; Ethiopia, 30.3%, and Rwanda, 68%, Efundu highlighted in her presentation. For more women to participate in politics (in Nigeria), “there must be a deliberate effort by all political actors to accommodate women because the problem can be solved if it is made a priority”, she resolves. “Rwanda just recently beat its record of 64% to 68% of women in politics because they saw the great change it made for their country.” On the Web sites and in the policy documents of the most powerful global development organizations, including the World Bank and United Nations agencies, it is often cited as the key piece of evidence that investing in poor girls and women in Asia, Africa, and Latin America creates a high rate of return.

However, female candidates have had to fight double battles as a result of the unreasonably excessive male privilege and double standards for women in a rigid patriarchal society like Nigeria’s. Nonetheless, their persistent determinations to fight means they are capable of winning against all odds. Nnena Elendu Ukeji, the Abia state representative for Bende federal

constituency (elected twice for the position), Francisca Oteng-Mensah of Ghana, and Joanah Mamombe of Zimbabwe are living testimonies of this. All three were present at The Convergence to tell their stories.

Francisca Oteng-Mensah, the youngest parliamentarian of the fourth republic of Ghana, who had won the battle of “being a female and a youth” running for office in her country addressed the audience saying, “in Ghana, we also have the problem where most of those in the government are from the older generation. I’m also from the two minority groups, I’m a woman and I’m a youth.” Oteng-Mensah entered the parliament at the age of 23, now she is 25 years old. Her story is similar to that of Joanah Mamombe, who is the youngest Member of Parliament in Zimbabwe, and also female. While running to represent Harare West Constituency, Mamombe became the leading voice in the fight for the improvement of her country’s archaic public health laws and systems.

These women were political experts to all in the audience, but for the female candidates, they doubled as an icon.



Fredrick Adetiba, Member, Not Too Young To Run Strategy Team



Candidates Having A Masterclass Session



Samson Itodo Presenting an Award of Pro-active Participation to Chikas Kumle SHOA Candidate, Plateau State



Chioma Agwuegbo, Communications Specialist and Strategy Team Member, NotTooYoungToRun



Cheta Nwanze, Head of Research, SB Morgan



Samson Itodo, Antonette Grant, Cynthia Mbamalu



Ebere Efundu, Women in Politics Forum



Antonette Grant, Senior Programme Manager and Governance Adviser DFID



Ire Toluhi, Music Artist, singing the National Anthem



Hon. Abdussamad Dasuki, Member, House of Reps



Yemi Adamolekun, Executive Director EIE Nigeria



Eugenia Abu, Multimedia Strategist & Broadcast Executive



Barr. Festus Okoye, National Commissioner, INEC (Left), Prof. Okechukwu Ibeanu, INEC National Commissioner, South-East (Right)



THE NIGERIAN STORY: PAST MISTAKES, LESSONS LEARNT AND THE FUTURE

Those who do not learn from history are in danger of repeating past events. Through a good knowledge of history, the next generation of leaders can understand the faults of past leaders, the consequences it bared on the country and the importance of the Not Too Young To Run Movement and The Convergence.

HISTORY

The Nigerian political scene has gone one full cycle. The economic recession of 2016 (which is still manifesting itself in the country today) can be compared with Shehu Shagari's administration in 1984. The recession of that time, similar to today's reality, was caused by a fall in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), due to a fall in oil prices, coupled with misappropriation of public funds by those in authority. It is interesting that the problems

that plague the nation today are the same that were prevalent in the post-independence era. The occurrences that took place from 1960 up until 1999, ought to have ushered in a new era of democratic excellence consisting of national unity, nonetheless the cues have not been taken by authorities.

In 1900, Britain assumed administration of Nigeria and set up protectorates throughout the territory. Later, in 1914, the protectorates were amalgamated to one Nigeria. The subjugation and alienation of the indigenous people prompted the "struggle for the freedom" --the fight for self-government by prominent Nigerians (including Chief Anthony Enaholo and Obafemi Awolowo), which dominated much of the 1950s. Eventually, Britain made concessions

and a new house of representatives was set up which included indigenous representation. Further advances towards independence included: the decision to give autonomy to the 3 regions in 1957—Northern, Eastern and Western Region—and the appointment of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as the first prime minister of Nigeria. On 1 October 1960, Nigeria gained her independence.

As a result of the regional divisions, politics was divided between ethnic groups; particularly the major ethnic groups i.e. Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa,

and this caused tension. Even though a new voice in politics came via the Midwest State created by Dennis Osadebay in 1963 to represent some minority groups.

Power struggles ensued between the three main ruling parties controlled by the major ethnic groups. There was serial rigging during the first elections and violence forced the frustrated army to intervene. These activities led to the first military coup. The coup led by General Aguiyi Ironsi served as the inspiration for future coups that occurred over



Panel Session at The Convergence

the course of Nigeria's short history. Political strife and unrest amongst the Igbos and Hausas, amongst other socio-political and economic conflicts, led to the Nigerian Civil War (Biafra War) in 1967.

After the war, many more coups occurred and two new republics were introduced as a result of the repetitive process for leaders that included: gain power, engage in corruption, coup with an intent to restore law and order, misuse power for selfish gain before another coup occurs and then the process repeats. Nigeria remained in a phillandering democratic state until the instatement of the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo –inaugurated on May 29, 1999.

PAST MISTAKES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Nigeria was never meant to be a country; it was created to fulfil a business requirement (To supply



A Masterclass Session with Young Political Candidates at The Convergence

goods and services to Great Britain). From 1914 to 1960, each region in the country governed themselves while adhering to the British constitution so it is no wonder they believed in the supremacy of their culture when relating to the central government. The 250 ethnic groups, forced together by artificial borders, had no shared identity until they were unified into a sovereign state

The violation of the rule of law was the rule of the day. Although the military coups, which occurred between 1966 and 1993, took place with the intention of restoring order to government and society, those who ended up in power became perverted with it and continued the cycle of corruption. The numerous coups that occurred were spurred by previous efforts to take over government i.e. both failed and successful attempts. Members of the army witnessed the ease at which official seized power and so when the opportunity arose –when government officials abused power–many of them staged military coups. This was unconstitutional. Total neglect for the laws of the nation by authorities infiltrated into society and led to a breakdown in morality throughout the nation. From the average driver on the streets, to corrupt police officers directing traffic on the road, the country was in a lawless state. Perhaps, if those who created the laws respected it and lived in accordance, maybe members of the society would have done the same and treat those in authority in regard.

Much of the problems that Nigeria faces are directly influenced by the ethno phobia that ran wild from the era of post–independence. Although, one could



in 1960. Even when Nigeria became independent, the political party systems did not make matters better; Nigeria was divided into the Northern Region, the Western Region and the Eastern Region. Three parties led the regions: National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (led by Nnamdi Azikiwe), Northern Peoples Congress (led by Ahmadu Bello), Action Group (led by Obafemi Awolowo). Each party represented a region and the major ethnic groups; the politicians were only fighting to represent the interest of their people not the country. This created tension especially because power was not shared equally amongst them.

The NPC (Northern Peoples Congress) was the ruling party and held the most power in parliament given they had the most representatives in the house. The leaders of the western region and eastern region did not like the power imbalance at play and felt their respective groups should hold the power. This faulty line of thought fundamentally led to the breakdown of the government and the other events that followed i.e. the belief in ethnic superiority and ownership/entitlement of power.



Young Political Candidates at The Convergence

argue that ethnic conflict was inevitable then, given the different cultural groups were once independent, 58 years later tribalism is no longer an excuse for deterred development and hampered national unity. Corruption has been more of a major setback for the national development process.

WHAT NEXT?

Every election period, political aspirants promise to fight corruption, but when elected into office, they become victims of

game is the game”, but part of the fight for political justice is a fight so that the rule that demands people to play the game will seize to exist. In the eyes and in the hearts of a growing plurality of citizens, the government has lost its legitimacy to govern, and change has never been more imperative. The way forward is clear.

Nigeria needs a new crop of leaders to preserve Nigeria’s corporate existence and make democracy meaningful. YIAGA AFRICA has taken a pragmatic approach to do this through the Not Too Young

consequence was a massive upsurge in the number of budding, enthusiastic young politicians running in the 2019 elections. The NTYTR law essentially created an increase in youth participation in the House of Representatives and Presidential elections, because it reduced the age for the Presidential seat from 40 to 35 years and House of Representatives from 30 to 25 years.

It feels galvanizing to live under the light of the Not Too Young To Run Act, signed by President Muhamadu Buhari. Before the



Interactive Session at the Convergence



Not Too Young To Run Movement, it had been a long time since we had a compelling democratic mythos. The Convergence, borne out of the NTYTR movement, provided a platform for empowering youth candidates for the 2019 elections with the necessary intellectual tips and practical tools for running effective political campaigns, as well as building a community of network for political solidarity and advocacy. The overall objective was to arm and equip the youth candidates mentally, broaden their horizon, improve their capacities and competencies, acquaint them with the global best practices, and generally boost their chances at the poll.

the vice that they were dead set against. What’s more, many leaders that are in elected offices today are those who have been in politics from the early days. Politics in Nigeria has thus become a game of cunning intelligence by those who believe they have understood the country better from scratch. It is often said that “the

To Run act and movement, which has galvanized hundreds of youths to run for political offices nationwide. The NTYTR movement successfully agitated for a further opening of the political space, through a constitutional amendment, which led to a reduction of age limit for elective posts in Nigeria. The immediate

Nigerians urgently need a fundamental rearrangement of the current federation to a competitive, just and federal system. Yet, to some in Nigeria, the Not Too Young To Run Movement still looks like a risky bet. It is the first modern story since Nigeria’s pre-independence when patriotic citizens began to actively fight for their own self-government after 50 years of colonial rule, and post-independence, when Nigerians fought again, for democracy, after 15 years



Not Too Young To Run Strategy Team Members



Hon. David Ombugadu, Member, House of Reps and Gov. Candidate, Nassarawa State

of military rule. They won both battles. But the way many citizens look at the idea of winning a similar battle today—this time for youth inclusion in governance—is alarmingly pessimistic.

The promise of a younger, better-ruled Nigeria feels like misplaced optimism to a lot of older Nigerians who have grown cynical to the repeated cycle of failed promises and corrupt leadership. However, when we take our time to study and understand the cultural forces that are at play, we see an underserved nation. But the Not Too Young To Run Movement is not a gamble at all; rather it is destined to be revolutionary through the rapidly expanding influence of youth culture and the power of solidarity. The NTYTR movement is essentially designed as an opportunity to collaborate with one another, both the young and old, for the progress of the nation.



VIEWS FROM YOUNG

Political Candidates at The Convergence 1.0



**—Joseph Bafiong,
Fresh Party candidate**

“As regards campaigns, The Convergence has been very useful in making proper decisions for my political mapping: targeting the right audience for effective campaign and training polling unit agents. It has also motivated me to run with an open and positive attitude.

“I am running to bring a youthful, vibrant and effective representation, which has been lacking in my constituency, and to further highlight the key issues that affect my constituents. I am also running to ensure that government delivers on projects and allocations to my constituency. If I don't win, I intend to see this entire process as a learning curve. I plan to go back to the drawing board and plan towards the next election. By planning, I mean I will engage with my constituents. And whoever wins, the aim is to build a partnership and initiate ideas that will make Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam great. Most importantly I intend to engage in self-development through professional courses and useful interactions, and ensure I remain relevantly visible in the political space. I will also continue with my profession of giving consultations on ICT to enable me raise funds for the next election.”

**—Chikas Kumle,
Social Democratic Party candidate**

“The convergence has broadened my knowledge about Politics, and built my

Capacity on how to acquire and dispense power for the growth and development of Nigeria. From the experiences shared by young politicians who ran successful campaigns and emerged victorious in other African countries—Boniface Mwangi from Kenya, Francesca from Ghana and Joanna Mamombe from Zimbabwe—I learnt how to collate and use data for my campaign, and how to use various means of raising funds for my campaign. I learned how to identify and work on my Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT).”

“I learned how to how to make a good campaign plan and a realistic budget, how to effectively utilize both traditional and social media for my campaign, how to appropriately communicate my ideas, intentions and plans to my constituents and electorates. I have adopted new strategies that have greatly improved the level of my consultations and engagements with my constituents. My presentations and interactions with the electorates are better now. My media engagements have increased now and my presentations have greatly improved. My use of data has helped in identifying areas I need to increase visibility. I now have more people donating and supporting my campaign through the exploration of the various means of fundraising.”

WHY WE RUN

Olubankole Wellington, Modern Democratic Party Candidate

I'd like to congratulate every candidate on making the very brave and difficult decision to run for office. I am sure I'm not just speaking for myself when I say it is unequivocally the most daring, difficult, stressful and expensive journey I've ever embarked upon. And I've tried some pretty daring, difficult and expensive things, you know?

Today, December 10th, 2018, means I've officially been a politician for exactly ONE month. The past weeks have been...interesting, and challenging to say the least. But they remind me a bit of when I first made the decision to follow my dreams and pursue my passion in the music industry for starters, and the entertainment business as a whole.

Much like these days with the Modern Democratic Party (MDP)—back then, with EME, we didn't know a soul in the business, we didn't have any major investor (or Godfather), we certainly didn't have enough money to fully fund our dream-chasing, but we chased anyway. We'd print posters in my University labs, paste them on the side of my car, and we'd go door to door and street to street, visiting all the hair and nail salons, the barbershops, the restaurants in our neighborhoods, asking the business owners if I could sing for their clients. Sometimes, they'd say no and kick us out on our butts. But sometimes, whether it was because they had fondness and admiration for our hustle and spirit, or purely out of pity, they'd allow me to sing, and then we'd try to sell our CDs from the boot of my car.

People may see all of the success we have experienced as a company...all the albums sold, concerts played and movies made over the years, and it's hard to believe that the first income EME ever generated as a company was from selling CDs from the boot of a car that would shake like an earthquake once you went above 50 miles per hour.

Back then, people thought we were crazy. And foolish. And way too optimistic and idealistic. People thought our dream was impossible. But history is only ever made by those who look impossible in the face and attempt to defy it. You see...some people will try and convince you that you can't do something, because of the limitations they've placed on their own lives. Some people will either try to discourage you from trying at all, or they will criticize every step you take, and every decision you make, simply because they are unwilling or unable to do it themselves.

They'll tell you that you must go door to door, but they won't volunteer to go with you. They'll tell you that you aren't posting enough campaign material all over town, but they won't contribute to help you print more. They'll criticize you for the position you are running for, and they'll criticize you for the party you chose... even if most of them won't bother to join a party themselves, or even get a PVC.

But when their voices get loudest, and their comments and tweets cut deepest, remember that you're not in it for them. Remember why you're running.

I'm running because I want to make a difference.

I'm running because there are so many issues that have plagued our society for decades, and instead of being content with criticizing from the sidelines, I'd like to play my part in fixing them. I'm running because I'd like to play a part in improving the standard of education for the average Nigerian child. As an empowered but concerned citizen, over the years I have given out scholarships for deserving students to further their studies, home and abroad; I've adopted schools, refurbished their facilities and donated equipment—but I feel like we need more people in Government who understand that the destiny of our country tomorrow, is directly related to what is happening in our classrooms today—and yet so many of our children are



in classrooms without working computers, and so many of our schools can not pass for conducive learning environments.

I'm running because I'd like to help ensure that affordable and accessible healthcare is achieved in Nigeria. I'm thankful to God that I was able to afford the cost of my own healthcare—I've battled skin cancer 3 times, but I realize that the average citizen in Nigeria cannot. And so what could have been a stage 1 tumor removal quickly escalates through stages 2 - 4, and then it is terminal. Oh, and incase you didn't know it, every 10 minutes, one woman in Nigeria dies on account of pregnancy or childbirth. Nigeria's newborn death rate (neonatal mortality) is 528 per day, one of the highest in the world. This is why, in my capacity as a citizen I have donated money, time, energy and resources to the fight against cancer, and I'd also like to play a role in the efforts against our absurdly high maternal mortality rates, and newborn death rates.

Today marks the completion of the International 16 days against Gender Based Violence campaign. As an influencer, and a media agency owner, I've been working with the European Union to raise awareness about Gender Based Violence against women and girls. But I shouldn't have to only work with foreigners to advance these causes. I'm running because we need people in Government right now that care enough about the plight of our mothers, sisters, and daughters to do better for them.

I'm running because I feel like I can impact job creation for our young people, and youth inclusion in Government and Business.

I am running for my unborn children... because when our generation is old and grey, and we hand the country over to them... and they asked what we did about the state of affairs... whether Nigeria ends up being great, or forever a shadow of what could have been, I want to be able to look my kids in the face and say I tried.







It's a lot harder to try...and a lot easier to criticize. It is a helluva lot easier to talk about it, than to do something about it. We only fail when we stop trying. And Battles are only lost when you stop fighting. So don't just tweet and talk...walk the walk. Don't just walk...run. Run...young people, run. You may fall, or you may fly... but at least you had the heart to try.



THE CONVERGENCE 2018

The largest gathering of youth candidates running for office in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria

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 6 Master Classes	 30 Speakers	 91 Political parties

————— #NotTooYoungToRun —————