

## Ubuntu: Connecting Power, Strength, and Purpose

Speaking at the Game Changers summit in Westminster was a profound personal experience for me. During Ginger Communications Leader's Voice Cohort 5 (LV5) journey, the fabulous women who travelled with me, as well as a stellar team of facilitators (Sarah Lloyd-Hughes, Robin Bayley, Dr. Helen Thompson-Whiteside and Nicky Moran) helped me transform my previously unformed ideas about the relationship between "me/I" (Power) and "we" (Community) into an unobstructed vision that connects to humanity (Purposeful Leadership). And to finally share my vision of Ubuntu with an incredible audience of over one hundred game changing women in London's Westminster was nothing short of magical.

Ubuntu is an African philosophy with deep roots in our collective humanity. Along with other

agelong African concepts on community and leadership e.g., Omoluabi, it has many nuances and encompasses the interdependence of all humans on one another: we belong to each other and exist in relation to each other. The pursuit of "I" or "me" should not be in competition with the "we" and conversely, the "we" cannot exist without an appreciation of the unique



contribution, and power that each individual "I" makes. Ubuntu 'I am because we are.'

More than ever before we need to embrace Ubuntu in our leadership journeys and embed it our personal, community and organisational spaces. We collectively face a fragile future, but the world seems increasingly fractured and divided. We must now work together to overcome many of the challenges ahead. The time for Ubuntu is now.

I listened with rapt attention to my sisters. Each one envisioned Ubuntu in unique ways, reflecting their own purposeful leadership journey with newfound clarity. Jessica Roberts warned us that the green technologies we need rely on critical minerals which will be extracted from mines that we have not yet built, 'It's not magic, its mining.' Helen Philpot argued that the technology which saved many of us from isolation during the pandemic can be no substitute for human interaction. We need to urgently re-connect and restore the "we" within our organisations and nations and across the world and we need strong 'I's to lead us there.

We are a generation of game-changing superwomen but many as of us are wrestling with self-doubt, plagued by imposter syndrome, and wondering if we can or if we should. Isn't there someone else better qualified? So, is the self-love Wendy Gardner describing the antidote to our vulnerabilities? Yes! The Ubuntu principles embrace self-love, only powerful, assured "I" build strong "we" i.e., communities and organizations Each self-loving "I" thrives and blossoms with the support and affirmation of "we" the wider community. I am because we are. Ubuntu in action!

The humanitarian and environmental crises we face are far from gender neutral. In many regions of the world, girls and women bear the responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel while gender inequalities still limit their access to education and other assets for human capital development. Nicola Nicoll argued for girl's education so that young women can realise the potential of their "I" and empower their "we," so that any community can represent and protect us all. This is very real in many native contexts. Women have held homes, communities, and

cultures together in times of peace, war, and crises. Strong empowered girls and women are the custodians of Ubuntu, and other African concepts of humanity.

As Beth Wright reminds us, we can be the change. We can show up in our individual vulnerability to build our collective

power; and from Kate Barker, I learned that the workplace and communities need to walk the talk of life balance as we seek accelerated corporate and economic growth in these challenging and uncertain times. .

The reaction of participants in Westminster on the day was overwhelmingly positive and clearly resonated with the audience. Ubuntu connects! Ubuntu is universal!!

I participated in the Game Changers Summit in the full power of Ubuntu, supported by country (Mrs. Bolanle Isola, wife of the Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom), family (Remi Olajoyegbe), mentors (Florence Ajimobi, Oluremi Olowu), friends (Kafilat Araoye, Oluwayemisi Jenkins, Mary Akangbe), mentees (Temidayo Aromire) and other members of the rapidly growing network of Bold Pathfinding Women of Africa (BPaWA). Many more would have been with us (Mosun Belo-Olusoga, Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu, Solape Adefala, Joan Ewetuya, Vicky Okine, Rachel Frith, Banke Dada, Bose Omisore). They, and so many others, in many cities and communities across Africa, wait for our feedback and nuggets of wisdom, all eager to connect with our sisters in the north, whom we are pleased to welcome into the strength of Ubuntu.



So, what does Ubuntu (along with other African concepts of humanity) bring to us, our communities, and organizations? Resilient communities and performing organizations are collectives of powerful I's, who respect each other's boundaries, yet contribute their unique attributes to establish, and be supported by 'we,' their collective strength. This is Ubuntu, I am because we are!

How shall we mobilize and cross pollinate the wisdom that we shared, for the benefit of more. The Summit was an exciting beginning, connecting each powerful 'I' to the collective strength of 'we' and 'purpose.' This held everyone spellbound all day in the historic Church Hall at Westminster! We affirm a shared vision to make the principles of Ubuntu, and other agelong African principles of humanity and purposeful leadership, universal!

Several initiatives have emerged from this transformative journey. These include (a) BOLDSpeaks a speaker platform on Ubuntu, humanity, and purpose (b) Ubuntu Connections a woman-to-woman platform to promote dialogue and support; (c) UbuntuPlus coaching, mentoring and leadership development training programmes. Our BPawa network, alongside Ginger Communications, I Am Remi Coaching and Leadership network, and close partners within the Game Changers Women's Leadership network, will implement an initial Q4 2023 reconnaissance trip to Nigeria. Our objectives are to connect our respective communities, share perspective, test methodologies, and reinforce dialogue that bolsters our Ubuntu connections platform and the UbuntuPlus coaching.

Together, we bring Ubuntu to the world, renewing our narrative of wisdom in unique ways that connect power, strength, and humanity to purposeful leadership for the future.



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