



The WomEngineers

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EMPOWERING WOMEN. ENGINEERING THE FUTURE.

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Celebrating Women Who Design, Build, Innovate, and Transform the *World.*

BUILDING LEADERS, NOT FOLLOWERS.

LEAD WITH PURPOSE. INSPIRE CHANGE. DRIVE IMPACT.



Engr. Chinyere Nnenna Igwegbe, FNSE
ENGINEER. LEADER. MENTOR. TRAILBLAZER.

President, APWEN

National

Dr. Joy Buolamwini

Pioneering Canadian-American Computer Scientist, Digital Activist, and "poet of code".
Founder, Algorithmic Justice League



INSPIRE
Real stories. Bold ideas.



INNOVATE
Emerging tech. Smart solutions.



EMPOWER
Careers. Growth. Opportunities.



IMPACT
Building today for a better tomorrow.

From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

Women Who Lead

By Engr. Asher Victoria Achile

Engineering has never been only about structures, systems, or formulas, it is about people—who they are, what they carry, and how they choose to shape the world around them.

In this edition of *WomEngineers*, we explore engineering as something for deeper than technical ability. We explore it as identity, as lived experience, and as influence.

We ask what it means to belong in spaces where women are still underrepresented, and how resilience becomes a form of innovation in itself.

Together, these narratives form the foundation of this edition; that engineering is not confined to laboratories or construction sites.

It lives in decisions, in leadership, in mentorship, and in the courage to persist when the path is unclear.



“

Leadership is not about creating followers; it is about creating more leaders.

”

Our cover feature on Aisha Bowe reminds us that limits are often imagined long before they are real. Her journey across aerospace engineering, entrepreneurship, and space exploration challenges us to rethink what is possible for women in STEM—especially for those who have had to build their own pathways in systems that were not originally designed for them.

Equally, our featured interview with Engr. Asher Victoria Achile brings this conversation home. It is a story of transition, persistence, and purpose—one that reflects the complexities of navigating engineering, leadership, identity, and public service in today's world. It is also a reminder that behind every professional title is a human story shaped by choices, challenges, and conviction.

As women in engineering, we are not only participants in systems—we are contributors to their redesign. We bring perspective, depth, and innovation that expand the meaning of what engineering can be.

May this edition inspire you to see beyond boundaries, to embrace your identity without compromise, and to recognize your influence wherever you stand.

Together,

Engr. Asher Victoria Achile
Editor-in-Chief
The *WomEngineers* Journal

WomEngineers

"Where Women Build the Future."



Ikenegbu before moving into Primary transportation services. He was School in my best friend and one of the Owerri, Imo greatest influencer in my life. State, after Sadly, he passed away in 2015.

My mother, Mrs. Rose Ngozi Igwegbe, is an exceptionally intelligent woman. Despite different locations. I limited opportunities for girls during her youth, she remained determined to pursue education and eventually earned her NCE Government Girls Secondary qualification, after we (her children) all graduated from the university. She later worked as a caterer and retired from Arewa Hotels in Kaduna.

Much of who I am today is because of the values they instilled in me.

The Young Girl Who Asked “Why?”

Interviewer: Before engineering, who was Chinyere as a young girl?

Engr. Chinyere: I was—and still am—a cheerful girl with big dreams and endless curiosity.



Interviewer: Thank you for honoring this invitation to be interviewed by WomEngineers Magazine. Our theme is “Building Leaders, Not Followers.” It is a pleasure to have you with us today.

Engr. Chinyere: Thank you for having me.

Interviewer: To begin, please tell us a little about yourself.

Engr. Chinyere: My name is Engr. Chinyere Nnenna Igwegbe. I am a Fellow of the Nigerian Society of Engineers and a Water Resources and Environmental Engineer.

I am also a STEM and a climate-change advocate. I love anything organic, and I am passionate about helping young people discover and maximize their potential.

Growing Up Across Nigeria

Interviewer: Tell us about your educational journey.

Engr. Chinyere: I attended several schools while growing up because my father worked with the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and was frequently transferred across the country.

I completed my primary education at

Kawo, and eventually graduated from Kaduna Capital School, Kaduna State

Between Primary School and SS3, I changed schools several times, which was quite challenging. For my university education, I attended Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where I studied Engineering.

Interviewer: So you've lived in different parts of Nigeria?

Engr. Chinyere: Yes. I was born in Lagos State, attended primary school in Imo State, secondary school in Kaduna State, and university in Kaduna State. In many ways, I consider myself a truly detribalized Nigerian because I have lived and learned across different cultures.

The Parents Who Shaped Her

Interviewer: Tell us about your parents.

Engr. Chinyere: I come from a middle-class family.

My father, Mr. Benedict Ekejiuba Igwegbe, worked with WAEC

I constantly asked questions:
“Why?”
“How?”
“What happened?”

I loved to understand how things worked. If I could get my hands on an object, I wanted to dismantle it, study it, and figure out how it functioned and see what I can apply to it.

I enjoyed working with my hands, especially with woods and simple materials. Most of my childhood friends were boys, and I spent a lot of time exploring, building, and experimenting.

Leadership Started in the Backyard

Interviewer: What experiences helped shape your confidence and leadership style?

Engr. Chinyere: Being the first child came with responsibility.

My father constantly reminded me: “Remember, you are the first child.”

That meant setting an example for my siblings.

I helped them with homework and eventually began teaching them regularly. Soon, our neighbours noticed and started sending their children as well. One child became two, then five, then many more.

Before long, our house had become an after-school learning centre.

Children arrived carrying kitchen stools to use as desks and chairs. I kept asking my father for

chalkboards, and he kept buying them. Eventually, we even painted part of a wall black so it could serve as a writing board.

The parents saw the progress their children were making and



began supporting the initiative. Not by paying me but making sure their kids are in class after school.

Looking back, I realize those experiences taught me leadership, responsibility, communication, and service long before I understood those concepts formally.

The Road to Engineering

Interviewer: Why engineering?

Engr. Chinyere: Interestingly, engineering was not my first choice.

I initially wanted to become an actress and study French.

When I told my father, he immediately said:

“No child of mine is going to be on television acting drama.”

I then considered studying Law because I enjoyed speaking and making arguments. However, I quickly realized I wasn't interested in reading endless legal texts.

Prior to that, I was fascinated by aviation and dreamed of becoming a pilot.

My father took me to the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology in Zaria. I loved everything I saw there. Unfortunately, after learning the cost, my father gently explained that he could not afford the training.

I was disappointed, but I understood.

Eventually, after a series of admissions, pre-degree studies, and unexpected turns, I found myself in Water Resources and Environmental Engineering at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Today, I can honestly say I have no regrets.

Engineering has been an extraordinary journey.

LEADERSHIP BY NECESSITY, NOT BY TITLE

Interviewer: A very good journey indeed. After all, it brought you to where you are today. Was there a

particular moment when you realized leadership would become part of your life's calling?

Engr. Chinyere: Naturally, I don't like things going wrong around me.

If something is not right, I find myself stepping in to fix it.

As the first child, I grew up in an environment where order mattered. So whenever I find disorder, I instinctively begin to organize things.

I also don't like being told what to do unnecessarily. Growing up, my parents expected me to know what needed to be done without constant instructions. So I became someone who was always competing with herself.

In school, it was the same pattern.

I became the first female class representative in my department and remained in that role from 100 Level through to 500 Level.

Over time, I realized something interesting—wherever I went, whether classes, workshops, or professional programs, I was often singled out for leadership.

Even when I deliberately tried to stay in the background, people would still call me forward.

I remember a workshop in Abuja at John Woods Hotel on women in procurement frameworks in Africa. I arrived late, hoping to stay unnoticed.

At breakfast, I waited for someone else to speak. Nobody did.

Eventually, I introduced myself and suggested we begin networking.

Immediately, a participant from the United States of America said, “Oh, we already have a leader.”

I literally excused myself and went to the restroom for a few minutes, hoping someone else would step up.

But when I returned, everyone was still waiting.

That was when I told myself: whenever leadership finds you, do not run from it—people are already looking up to you.

A similar thing happened in Canada. I introduced myself at a networking session, waiting for an ice breaker nobody said a word and I simply said good morning, Bonjour, introduced myself and coordinated the session, then a Ugandan woman said, “I like your confidence. You are a great leader.”

At that point, I made a conscious decision to stop resisting what kept finding me.

THE CHALLENGES OF BEING ONE OF FEW

Interviewer: Engineering remains male-dominated in many places. What were the biggest barriers you faced as a young female engineer?

Engr. Chinyere: One of the first challenges was being underestimated.

We were only five girls in my class. As class representative, I was



determined that none of us would drop out.

In other departments, many female students disappeared by 300 Level. I made sure all five of us graduated, even though we completed at different times.

Another major challenge was the lack of mentorship. There were very few female lecturers or visible role models at the time.

Fortunately, I had mentors such as Professor A.S. Adefila and Professor Donatus Adie who guided me from my first year.

There were also moments when women were excluded from decision-making spaces.

As class representative, I often had to insist on inclusion. At one point, I was reported to the Head of Department for being “stubborn.”

The HOD simply asked, “Who elected her?”

When they replied that the class had elected me, he said, “Then whatever



she says is binding.”

Being the only woman in the room often meant carrying representation on your shoulders.

There is also the tendency for women's contributions to be overlooked or attributed to others, while emotional responses are sometimes misread as weakness.

But I made a decision early: every barrier is a problem to solve.

My father always told me: “If you fall, rise again. Keep rising. One day you will stand and not fall again.”

So I focused on mentors, networks, and results—and let performance speak for itself.

Once your results are clear, respect follows naturally.

Did you ever feel underestimated because you were a woman?

Yes. During my Youth Service, I

was the only female Platoon Leader in my set at Obubra, Cross River State. I had to work twice as hard as my counterparts. I made sure my platoon was always at the top. We drilled at every opportunity, and during the inter-platoon competition, we came second position. I participated in almost all the events.

Also, at a construction site, foremen often did not respect female engineers and would not listen to us. Some would say they had been in the job long before we were born.

What was the most difficult professional challenge you have had to overcome?

My first assignment as an HSE officer was with Dual Engineering Services Ltd and they had a project at Ajax Petroleum in Calabar to rehabilitate the Millerio Jetty that has failed and ships cannot dock anymore.

All the labourers were significantly older than me and initially did not want to listen to

safety briefings before work. I also refused to allow work to proceed without compliance. Mind you this was during my service year as a corp member.

After several hours, I devised a strategy. I convinced one of them, who then spoke to the rest. Eventually, they all came together, and I addressed them respectfully. They responded positively, and we successfully executed the project in seven days despite the storm conditions.

Was there ever a moment when you considered giving up?

Yes, during school. But whenever I remembered my father and family, I kept pushing forward.

What kept you going?

I always use this phrase: “O dighi a digide, O bu nwa mgbe nta”—meaning, it won't be too long; this phase shall also pass.

AUTHORITY VS INFLUENCE

Interviewer: What is the difference between having authority and having influence?

Engr. Chinyere: Authority is positional. It comes with a title and can command compliance.

Influence, on the other hand, is earned. It comes from trust, consistency, credibility, and value delivered over time.

Authority may open doors, but influence keeps those doors open.

I have seen people with titles but no followers, and I have also seen people without formal titles move entire systems because of influence.

A mentor with authority may guide you, but a mentor with influence can speak for you in rooms where decisions are made and open opportunities you cannot access alone.

That is the difference.

WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

Interviewer: What qualities have made you an effective leader?

Engr. Chinyere: I would highlight three key qualities:

Empathy – understanding different realities and perspectives as well as considering future differences.

Decisiveness – the ability to act even with incomplete information and getting it right

Authenticity – staying grounded in your values

A leader must listen deeply, act wisely, and remain true to themselves.

I also believe in emotional discipline. Not every situation deserves an immediate reaction. Sometimes leadership requires pausing, reflecting, and responding thoughtfully rather than emotionally.

FAIRNESS IN DECISION-MAKING

Interviewer: Some people say women leaders often hear only one side before making decisions. What is your view?

Engr. Chinyere: I do not take sides simply because someone dislikes another person.

Every relationship is different. So when someone brings a complaint, I insist on hearing all sides.

In fact, I often require that all parties be present before any conclusion is reached. If someone refuses that process, it usually signals that something is missing.

Fairness is essential. You cannot judge a matter without hearing all sides.

Once people understand your commitment to fairness, they stop bringing incomplete stories.

The same principle applies to projects and institutional decisions—take time to examine perspectives before deciding.

MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS

Interviewer: How do you determine the right course of action in difficult situations?

Engr. Chinyere: I follow a simple process:

First, gather all available information.

Second, consult trusted advisers with diverse perspectives.

Third, evaluate which option aligns with my values and serves the greater good.

Then I make the decision—and I take full responsibility for it.

Leaders cannot outsource decision-making and later disclaim responsibility.

Even when advice is given, the final decision is yours.

And if things go wrong, you must own it.

Indecision is often worse than a wrong decision.

LESSONS FROM FAILURE

Interviewer: What has failure taught you about leadership?

Engr. Chinyere: Failure has taught me resilience.



I do not give up easily. When things go wrong, I reflect deeply and ask: what can be improved?

It has also taught me humility. I am not above mistakes.

Another important lesson is the value of apology. My parents taught us to sincerely say “thank you” and “I’m sorry.”

Admitting mistakes builds more trust than pretending to be perfect.

Some of my greatest lessons have come from failure.

H A N D L I N G C R I T I C I S M

Interviewer: How do you handle criticism and opposition?

Engr. Chinyere: I separate the message from the messenger.

If there is truth in the criticism, I learn from it.

If it is noise, I let it go.

Sometimes opposition simply means you are challenging the status quo—and that is often necessary for progress.

When I contested for the position of Vice President of APWEN, there were comments such as, “She has no class.”

I found it amusing.

I simply asked, “If I have no class, how did I graduate?”

When I eventually won, I joked,

“So the classless has become classful.”

Criticism does not stop me—it refines focus and strengthens resolve.

L E A D E R S H I P A T A P W E N



Interviewer: What does serving as APWEN President mean to you?

Engr. Chinyere: Leadership is about creating conditions for others to succeed.

It is not about position—it is about responsibility.

For me, it means unlocking the potential in every woman engineer and ensuring she has the opportunity to thrive.

And see that we do more with the girls to take up STEM subjects.

V I S I O N F O R A P W E N

Interviewer: What is your vision for APWEN?

Engr. Chinyere: My focus is clear: in as much as I cannot create another vision for APWEN, I align my mandate for my tenure to APWEN vision. My mandate is to ensure:

Visibility. Capacity. Impact.

I want women engineers to be more visible, better equipped, and more impactful in society.

I M P A C T F U L I N I T I A T I V E S

Interviewer: Which achievement stands out to you most?

Engr. Chinyere: One significant initiative was our International Women's Day programme.

Instead of speaking at students, we invited them to speak to us.

Their feedback was direct and powerful. They requested:

- Teacher training
- ICT laboratories
- Better learning resources
- Functional wash/toilets facilities

It was eye-opening and reminded us how much more needs to be done.

Also the provision of water borehole at St Louis Grammer School in Ibadan Oyo State.

The girls were happy and you could see the excitement on their faces during the commissioning.

These moments remain the most impactful experiences of my presidency for now.

We have other impactful projects and products on the pipeline.

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP

Interviewer: How is APWEN addressing the gender gap in engineering?

Engr. Chinyere: The challenge is not one gap—it is a pipeline issue.

Girls are lost at multiple stages:

Primary school, secondary school, university, early career, certification, and leadership.

APWEN works across this entire pipeline through STEM outreach, mentorship, career talks, competitions, and university chapters.

We currently have about forty four (44) collegiate chapters and forty three Professional Chapters across Nigeria

Our goal is simple: ensure girls not only enter engineering but thrive within it.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN ENGINEERS

Interviewer: What opportunities exist for women engineers in Africa?

Engr. Chinyere: The opportunities are enormous.

Key growth areas include:

- Renewable energy
- Climate resilience
- Water resource management
- Smart agriculture



- Circular economy and waste recycling
- Artificial intelligence
- Infrastructure development
- Drone and sensor technologies

These are areas where engineering meets real human needs—and women have a critical role to play.

Africa's future depends on engineering solutions, and women must be central to that future.

Interviewer: What impact is Artificial Intelligence having on engineering careers?

Engr. Chinyere: Artificial Intelligence allows us to work smarter.

Today, AI supports:

- Asset management
- Predictive maintenance
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Flood mapping
- Agricultural monitoring
- Infrastructure planning

AI is no longer optional; it is becoming a core engineering tool.

Interviewer: What emerging technology excites you the most?

Engr. Chinyere: Drone technology.

I recently visited a large farm in Nasarawa State where drones handled much of the monitoring and operational work. The technology was remarkable.

There are also sensor-based systems that allow farmers to monitor livestock and agricultural activities remotely.

These technologies have tremendous potential—not only for agriculture, but also for security Healthcare services and national development.

Interviewer: Who is Engr. Chinyere when she is not working?

Engr. Chinyere: I am a family-oriented woman.

I enjoy being at home with my family and trying out or creating new recipes.

I love farming, organic living, research, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

I avoid highly processed foods whenever possible.

Recently, I started experimenting with making my own bread using healthier ingredients.

I am also passionate about natural wellness and preventive health practices.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Engr. Chinyere: I love:

- Travelling
- Hiking /Nature
- Exploring new cultures

- Meeting people
- Learning new things

Travel has become such a passion that I eventually founded a travel initiative called Krumberg Tours

In 2016, I organized an engineering tour to Poland and Germany. The experience was incredible.

Now I am considering future tours to countries like Vietnam because of the opportunities to learn about manufacturing, technology, textiles, and entrepreneurship.

Interviewer: What book has influenced your life the most?

Engr. Chinyere: One of the

most influential books apart from my Bible that I have ever read is "See You at the Top" by Zig Ziglar.

Another is God's Generals.

I also enjoy fiction and inspirational literature.

Interviewer: What motivates you every morning?

Engr. Chinyere: Realizing that there is another day to conquer actually motivates me

Interviewer: How do you balance leadership, family, personal growth, and service?

Engr. Chinyere: I have a wonderful family that



understands my purpose.

They know that many of these responsibilities are seasonal.

I deliberately and intentionally create time for them.

For personal growth, I travel, explore, and meet people.

Every journey teaches me something new.

Balance is not always perfect, but with a supportive family and clear priorities, it becomes possible.

Interviewer: What brings you the greatest joy?

Engr. Chinyere: Seeing younger people succeed.

I met a young girl about 2 years ago named Zainab Idris whom I had mentored through the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) mentoring programme.

When we first met, she was uncertain about her future.

We stayed in touch.

A few years later, I met her again in Lagos. She was confident, thriving, and serving as the president of her university's SWE chapter.

Moments like that bring me immense joy.

They remind me why mentorship matters.

Interviewer: If every girl in Africa could hear

one message from you today, what would you tell her?

Engr. Chinyere: You are not the exception—you are the evidence.

Leadership is not a title; it is the decision to see a problem and refuse to look away.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is acting while afraid.

You do not need to save the whole continent. Start with your corner of it.



- Fix the water point.
- Start the plastic collection programme.
- Teach a younger girl.
- Sit in front of the room.
- Speak even when your voice shakes.

The future is not waiting for you somewhere far

away.

You are building it right now with every choice you make.

- Do not shrink.
- Do not apologize for your ambition.
- Rise.
- Lead.

And when you succeed, reach back and pull another girl up with you.

This is not just your future.

This is Africa's future.





THE PRESIDENT
ENGR. CHINYERE NNENNA IGWEGBE, FNSE



ON BEHALF OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, COUNCIL AND ENTIRE MEMBERS OF

The Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria

A DIVISION OF THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS

ENCOURAGE ENHANCE EXCEL

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



REWORK ACADEMY

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SHE BUILDS

APWEN and Rework Academy are training 1,000 female engineers in tech, then incubating 100 women-led startups.

- EMPOWERING WOMEN ENGINEERS
- BUILDING TECH STARTUPS
- CREATING THE FUTURE

1,000
Engineers Trained

100
Startups Incubated

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SPOTLIGHT

TOP NIGERIAN WOMEN IN AI & ENGINEERING

Shaping Intelligence. Redefining Systems. Engineering the Future.

Artificial Intelligence and advanced engineering are no longer distant frontiers—they are active spaces of African innovation. Across the continent, women are not only participating in this transformation; they are defining its direction, ethics, and impact.

This spotlight celebrates ten African women whose work in AI, data science, engineering, and technology leadership is reshaping global narratives.

Ifeoma Ajunwa (Nigeria)

Ifeoma Ajunwa is a Nigerian-American legal scholar, sociologist, and leading global voice in AI ethics, workplace technology, and digital labor governance. She is the Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Law at Emory University, where she also serves as Associate Dean and Founding Director of the A.I. and Future of Work Program.



Her research sits at the intersection of law, artificial intelligence, labor rights, and technology, with a strong focus on algorithmic bias, data privacy, workplace surveillance, and equity in digital systems. She is widely recognized for examining how AI affects employment, discrimination, and corporate governance, particularly in relation to marginalized groups.

Ajunwa has held academic appointments and fellowships at leading institutions including Cornell University, Yale Law School, Harvard University's

Berkman Klein Center, and Columbia University. She is also an elected member of the American Law Institute and a Life Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

She is the author of *The Quantified Worker* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), which explores how workplace technologies are reshaping labor and human dignity.

A frequent expert witness, keynote speaker, and policy advisor, she has testified before the U.S. Congress and federal agencies on AI-driven discrimination and workers' rights in the digital age.

Her work continues to shape global debates on ethical AI, digital justice, and the future of work, positioning her as one of the most influential African voices in technology governance today.



Chinasa T. Okolo (Nigeria)

Chinasa T. Okolo is a Nigerian-American computer scientist and leading voice in Artificial Intelligence governance, responsible AI adoption, and technology policy in the Global

SPOTLIGHT

South. She is the Founder and Scientific Director of Technectura and has worked as a consultant with global institutions including the United Nations and the World Bank.

Her research focuses on how AI systems can be designed and deployed ethically, particularly in contexts shaped by inequality and structural bias. She is known for combining technical expertise in computer science with ethnographic and policy research methods, especially in healthcare and African AI ecosystems.

Okolo holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Cornell University, where she also studied computer vision and biomedical applications of AI. She has completed internships at major tech companies including Microsoft and Apple, and previously served as a Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Technology Innovation.

She has contributed to major policy frameworks, advising the African Union's Continental AI Strategy and Nigeria's national AI strategy, with a strong emphasis on responsible and context-aware AI deployment.

Her work has earned global recognition, including being named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 (AI, 2025) list and TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People in AI (2024).

Okolo represents a new generation of African technologists shaping not only how AI is built—but how it is governed for fairness, inclusion, and societal impact.

Damilola Olokesusi (Nigeria)

Damilola Olokesusi is the Co-founder and CEO of Shuttlers, a Nigerian technology-driven mobility startup transforming urban commuting for professionals and organizations across major

cities such as Lagos and Abuja.

Through Shuttlers, she is redefining shared transportation by leveraging digital coordination, operational efficiency, and smart mobility systems to improve reliability, comfort, and access in everyday commuting within Africa's rapidly growing urban environments.

She is widely recognized as a mobility technology entrepreneur and systems innovator, whose work focuses on logistics optimization and platform-driven transport solutions rather than core AI or data science development.



Odunayo Eweniyi is a Nigerian business

Executive, fintech entrepreneur, and activist. She is the Co-founder and Chief Operations Officer of PiggyVest, one of Nigeria's leading digital savings and investment platforms, and also a Co-founder of Feminist Coalition.

A graduate of Covenant University with a first-class degree in Computer Engineering, she began her career building digital solutions before co-founding PiggyVest in 2016, a platform that has transformed personal finance management and savings culture in Nigeria.

Through her work in fintech, she has contributed to

the advancement of digital financial infrastructure, user-centered financial systems, and technology-enabled access to savings and investment tools, helping to expand financial inclusion across Africa.

Beyond technology, Eweniyi is also known for her civic engagement and advocacy for social equity, particularly through initiatives that support women's rights and civic participation.

INSIGHT

What connects these women is not just expertise in technology—but leadership in shaping its direction.

They are:

- Defining AI ethics and governance
- Building data-driven systems for African challenges
- Expanding digital infrastructure
- Challenging bias in global algorithms
- Rewriting the narrative of who leads innovation

CONCLUSION

Africa is not waiting to be included in the AI revolution.

It is already contributing to it—through women who are building, questioning, designing, and leading.

The future of intelligence is not only artificial.

It is also African.

And increasingly, it is female.



On Leadership & Impact

“
Leadership is not about creating followers; it is about creating more leaders.
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Engineering has never been only about structures, systems, or formulas. It is about **people**—who they are, what they carry, and how they choose to shape the world around them.



As women in engineering, we are not only participants in systems—we are contributors to their **redesign**. We bring perspective, depth, and innovation that expand the meaning of what engineering can be.



Our work extends beyond blueprints and calculations—it lives in the decisions we make, the lives we influence, and the futures we help build.

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INSPIRE
 Real stories.
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2026

**Mayen Adetiba
 Technical Bootcamp**

(MATBC) 7TH EDITION

THEME:

**Girls in Engineering:
 Powering Sustainable
 Futures with Technology**



**ENGR. MAYEN ADETIBA,
 FNSE, FNICE, FAEng**

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 JULY, 2026**

**9:00AM
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 YABA COLLEGE
 OF TECHNOLOGY,
 YABA, LAGOS STATE.**



**ENGR. CHINYERE NNENNA
 IGWEGBE, FNSE
 APWEN President**

The Conscience of AI

Ethics, Bias, and the Future of Technology

Insights inspired by Joy Buolamwini on fairness, accountability, and responsible innovation

Artificial intelligence is often described in terms of speed, efficiency, and innovation. But beneath the technical language lies a quieter question that is becoming impossible to ignore:

Who does AI work for—and who does it fail?

Joy Buolamwini has become one of the most influential voices pushing the world to confront that question. Her work does not just examine technology; it examines conscience.

When Machines “See,” But Not Equally

In her early experiences working with facial recognition systems, Buolamwini encountered something unexpected: the systems often failed to detect her face unless she used a visual workaround.

What seemed like a technical flaw revealed something deeper—bias embedded in design.

From that moment emerged a powerful idea: that algorithms do not simply process data; they inherit the worldview of the data and people behind them.

This insight shaped what she later described as the “coded gaze”—a way of understanding how bias becomes built into technology systems.

Bias Is Not a Glitch—It Is a Design Issue

One of the most influential contributions associated with Buolamwini's research is the finding that commercial AI systems often perform

unevenly across different demographic groups.

Her widely cited Gender Shades study demonstrated a consistent pattern: systems tended to perform better for lighter-skinned men and less accurately for darker-skinned women.

The significance of this was not just technical—it was structural.

It showed that bias in AI is not accidental noise. It is often the result of:

- Unbalanced training data
- Limited evaluation frameworks
- Narrow definitions of “accuracy”
- Lack of accountability in development processes

In other words, bias is often engineered—not discovered.



The Algorithmic Justice Movement

In response to these realities, Buolamwini founded the Algorithmic Justice League, an initiative focused on making algorithmic harm visible and actionable.

Its work goes beyond critique. It combines:

- Research that exposes bias
- Creative storytelling that makes AI impacts understandable
- Advocacy for policy and regulation
- Public education on digital fairness

The goal is not to reject technology, but to reshape how it is built and governed.

Accountability in a World of Invisible Systems

One of the biggest challenges in artificial intelligence is invisibility.

Algorithms make decisions in hiring, policing, healthcare, and finance—often without users knowing how those decisions are made.

Buolamwini's work pushes for a shift in thinking:

If a system affects human lives, it must also be accountable to human standards.

That includes:

- Transparency in design
- Independent auditing of systems
- Clear consequences for harmful deployment
- Inclusion of diverse perspectives in development

Without accountability, efficiency can quietly become inequality.

Beyond Ethics: The Question of Power

The conversation around AI ethics is not only about fairness—it is also about power.

Who gets to define what “normal” looks like in data?

Who decides what counts as error or success?

Who is included in the datasets that shape digital reality?

Buolamwini's work highlights that these are not technical questions alone. They are social and political questions embedded inside code.

Responsible Innovation: A Shift in Mindset

Responsible innovation does not slow progress—it reshapes its direction.

From Buolamwini's perspective, building better AI requires:

- Broader and more representative datasets
- Continuous auditing, not one-time testing
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Ethical reflection embedded into engineering practice

The future of AI depends not only on how advanced systems become, but on how responsibly they are designed.

The Future of Technology: A Question of Conscience

AI is often described as intelligent systems making decisions.

But the deeper challenge is this:

Can intelligence exist without fairness? And can innovation be meaningful without accountability?

Buolamwini's work suggests that the answer is no.

Technology, in her framing, is not just a tool. It is a mirror. And what it reflects depends entirely on who builds it—and what they choose to see.

Here is a polished, magazine-ready insert that fits your theme and tone:

Recognition, Roots, and Global Impact

Joy Buolamwini was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, to Ghanaian immigrants. Her life has been shaped by a global journey, having lived across Ghana, Barcelona (Spain), Oxford (United Kingdom), and in the United States—Memphis, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia.

She often describes herself as a “daughter of science and of the arts,” reflecting the influence of her father, an academic, and her mother, an artist. This blend of analytical thinking and creative expression has deeply informed her approach to technology, where she also



identifies as a Poet of Code—a framing that captures her belief that computation and creativity can coexist in shaping more humane systems.

Her work and voice have gained recognition across global platforms. In 2017, she won the grand prize in the professional category of the Search for Hidden Figures contest, an initiative inspired by the film *Hidden Figures* and supported by PepsiCo and 21st Century Fox. The competition attracted over 7,000 submissions and aimed to spotlight emerging women leaders in STEM.

Buolamwini's influence extends far beyond academia and research. She has delivered widely viewed talks, including her TEDx presentation “How I'm Fighting Bias in Algorithms,” and appeared on the TED Radio Hour. Her message has also been amplified through media platforms such as Amy Poehler's *Smart Girls*, and she was recognized by *Fast Company* as one of the “design heroes defending democracy online.”

In 2018, she was named among the BBC's 100 Women, and in 2019 she appeared on *Fortune*'s list of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders, where she was described as “the conscience of the A.I. revolution.” That same year, she was included in the inaugural *Time* 100 Next list, further cementing her

global influence.

Her advocacy and visibility continued to expand in the years that followed. She was featured in global campaigns, including Levi's International Women's Day initiative in 2020, and appeared in the widely discussed documentary *Coded Bias*, which brought algorithmic discrimination into mainstream conversation. She was also honored as a recipient of the Great Immigrants Award by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

In recognition of her continued impact, Buolamwini received the ASQ Hutchens Medal in 2022 and was listed in *Time* 100 AI in 2023. Her contributions have also been recognized by leading institutions: in 2024, she received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Dartmouth College and delivered the keynote address at its Social Justice Awards.

That same year, she was honored with multiple distinctions, including the NAACP–Archewell Foundation Digital Civil Rights Activist Award, which also included funding to support her ongoing work in AI accountability, and the Octavia Butler Award in Computer Science from the Center for the Study of African American Religious Life.

Across continents, disciplines, and platforms, her journey reflects a consistent theme: technology must not only be intelligent—it must also be just.

Closing Reflection

The future of AI will not be shaped by algorithms alone, but by the values embedded within them.

Through her research and advocacy, Joy Buolamwini has reframed AI not just as a technological frontier, but as a moral one.

And in that framing, she challenges every engineer, policymaker, and innovator to ask a fundamental question:

What kind of conscience is being built into our machines?





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ENGR. CHINYERE NNENNA IGWEGBE, FNSE
 ON BEHALF OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, COUNCIL AND MEMBERS OF



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Beyond the Blueprint

ENGINEERING & INNOVATION FRONTIERS

Feature Story

FROM SOIL TO STRENGTH: THE NSUKKA WOMEN AND THE YELLOW PEPPER ECONOMY

How rural women in Nsukka are transforming agriculture, income, and community resilience through yellow pepper farming

In the rolling hills of Enugu State lies Nsukka, a region long known for its fertile soil and strong agricultural heritage. But beyond tradition, a quiet transformation is taking place—led not by large agribusinesses, but by women farmers whose work is reshaping local economies one harvest at a time.

At the center of this transformation is yellow pepper farming: a crop that has become both a livelihood and a pathway to empowerment.

The Power of a Simple Crop

Yellow pepper, known locally for its rich color, distinct aroma, and high demand in Nigerian markets, has become a strategic crop for many women farmers in Nsukka.

Unlike capital-intensive cash crops, yellow pepper offers:

- Fast growth cycles
- Strong local demand
- Year-round cultivation potential
- Low barrier to entry for smallholder farmers

For many women, this means something powerful: consistent income without leaving their communities.

Women at the Heart of Agricultural Value Chains

Across Nsukka communities, women are not just farmers—they are processors, traders, and distributors.

Their involvement spans the entire value chain:

- Seed selection and nursery preparation
- Organic and small-scale cultivation
- Harvesting and drying processes
- Market distribution to urban centers

This integrated role allows them to retain more value from their produce, rather than relying solely on middlemen.

What begins as farming becomes economic independence.

More Than Farming: A System of Survival and Growth

For many households, yellow pepper farming is not an “extra” activity—it is the economic backbone.

Income from pepper harvests supports:

- School fees for children
- Healthcare expenses
- Small business investments
- Household food security

In this way, agriculture becomes more than production. It becomes a stabilizing system for family resilience.

Climate, Land, and Adaptation

Nsukka's agricultural success is closely tied to its environment, but climate variability has

introduced new challenges:

- Irregular rainfall patterns
- Soil nutrient depletion
- Pest and crop disease pressures

In response, women farmers are increasingly adopting:

- Compost-based fertilization
- Crop rotation practices
- Cooperative farming models
- Shared knowledge networks

These adaptations reflect a growing shift from subsistence farming to knowledge-driven agriculture.

The Rise of Women Cooperatives

One of the most significant developments in Nsukka's yellow pepper economy is the rise of women-led cooperatives.

These groups provide:

- Access to shared farmland
- Bulk purchasing of seeds and inputs
- Collective bargaining power in markets
- Financial support systems (savings and loans)

By working together, women are reducing vulnerability and increasing market influence.

Agriculture, once individual and fragmented, is becoming organized and strategic.

From Local Markets to Regional Demand

Demand for Nsukka yellow pepper extends beyond local communities into major urban markets across Nigeria.

Its appeal lies in:

- Strong flavor profile
- Cultural significance in cuisine
- Consistent quality from local production systems

As demand grows, so does the opportunity for scaling production—provided infrastructure, storage, and logistics improve.

Challenges That Remain

Despite progress, Nsukka women farmers still face structural challenges:

- Limited access to mechanized tools
- Post-harvest losses due to storage gaps
- Fluctuating market prices
- Limited access to agricultural credit

These barriers highlight a critical gap between potential and support systems.

Beyond Agriculture: A Story of Agency

What makes the Nsukka yellow pepper story powerful is not only economic output—it is agency.

These women are:

- Sustaining households
- Strengthening rural economies
- Preserving agricultural knowledge
- Building informal but effective economic systems

In doing so, they challenge the idea that innovation only happens in cities or laboratories.

Sometimes, innovation grows in soil.

Conclusion: The Future Is Cultivated

The Nsukka women remind us that agriculture is not just about food production—it is about power, dignity, and transformation.

With the right support—access to finance, improved infrastructure, and agricultural technology—yellow pepper farming could evolve from a survival strategy into a scalable agribusiness model.

But even now, in its current form, it is already something profound:

A quiet revolution led by women, rooted in the soil, and powered by resilience.



APWEN NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S EVENTS DIARY





Feature Article

WHEN CODE BECOMES POLICY: WHY ENGINEERS MUST LEAD ETHICAL CONVERSATIONS

How engineering decisions are shaping governance, rights, and global systems

In earlier generations, policy was written in parliaments, courts, and ministries. Today, a growing share of it is being written elsewhere—in lines of code, system architectures, and algorithmic models.

From identity verification systems to facial recognition, from financial scoring tools to predictive policing platforms, engineering decisions are no longer just technical choices. They are governance mechanisms.

The question is no longer whether engineers influence society.

It is whether they are prepared to accept that responsibility.

From Engineering Decisions to Public Consequences

Every system begins as a design problem: improve efficiency, reduce cost, optimize performance.

But once deployed at scale, these systems

begin to regulate human behavior in ways that resemble policy:

- Who gets access to credit
- Who is flagged as “high risk”
- Who is approved for jobs or housing
- Who is visible—or invisible—to

institutions

These are not abstract outputs. They are life-shaping decisions.

Engineering, in this sense, has become a form of silent governance.

The Hidden Shift: From Tools to Systems of Control

Traditionally, tools assist human decision-making.

Modern digital systems often replace it.

Machine learning models trained on historical data begin to reproduce historical patterns—sometimes reinforcing inequality under the appearance of neutrality.

This creates a dangerous illusion: that algorithmic decisions are objective because they are mathematical.

But mathematics does not remove bias from data. It can amplify it.

When systems scale across millions of users, small design choices become structural forces.

Why Engineers Are Now Policy Actors

Whether intentional or not, engineers now shape:

- How rights are accessed in digital environments
- How identities are verified and categorized
- How risks are defined and distributed
- How visibility is granted or denied

This means engineering is no longer separate from governance.

It is embedded within it.

A model that determines loan eligibility is not just a tool—it is an economic gatekeeper.

A surveillance system is not just software—it is a civic oversight mechanism.

A recommendation algorithm is not just design—it is cultural influence infrastructure.

The Ethical Gap in Technical Training

Most engineering education focuses on:

- Optimization
- Performance
- Scalability
- Efficiency

But the real-world impact of systems demands additional questions:

- Who might be harmed?
- Who is excluded from the data?
- What assumptions are embedded in the model?
- What happens when the system fails?
- Who is accountable when it does?

Without these questions, engineering becomes incomplete—not in skill, but in responsibility.

The Rise of Algorithmic Governance

Across the world, governments and private institutions are increasingly relying on automated systems to support decision-making.

These systems influence:

- Border control and immigration screening
- Tax fraud detection
- Public service allocation
- Criminal justice risk assessments
- Social benefit distribution

This shift is often justified by efficiency and scale.

But efficiency without accountability creates a governance gap—one where decisions are made without clear human responsibility.

When Systems Decide, Accountability Must Be Designed

One of the central challenges in modern engineering is not building systems that work, but building systems that can be questioned.

Accountability in engineering requires:

- Transparency in design choices
- Explainability in outcomes
- Auditability of performance

Mechanisms for appeal and correction

Clear human ownership of automated decisions
Without these safeguards, systems become difficult to challenge—even when they are wrong.

The Engineer as a Civic Actor

The modern engineer is not only a builder of systems.

They are also a participant in shaping:

- Rights in digital spaces
- Trust in institutions
- Distribution of opportunity
- Public perception of fairness

This role carries a civic dimension.

It requires engineers to think beyond “Does it work?” and toward “What does it do to society?”

Ethics Is Not a Phase—It Is a Design Constraint

One of the most persistent misconceptions in technology development is that ethics can be addressed after deployment.

In reality, ethical outcomes are determined long before release:

- In how data is selected
- In how success is defined
- In how edge cases are handled
- In what is optimized—and what is

ignored

Once systems are scaled, harm is not easily reversible.

Ethics, therefore, is not an add-on. It is an engineering constraint like memory, speed, or accuracy.

Toward Responsible Engineering Leadership

If code is becoming policy, engineers cannot remain silent participants in its consequences.

Responsible leadership in engineering requires:

Engaging with policymakers, not avoiding them
 Collaborating with social scientists, ethicists, and affected communities
 Designing for failure, not just success
 Prioritizing human dignity alongside technical performance

It also requires humility: recognizing that technical expertise alone is not sufficient to govern social impact.

Conclusion: Building Systems That Govern Well

The world is entering an era where infrastructure is increasingly algorithmic.

In this environment, engineering decisions are no longer hidden behind technical abstraction. They are becoming visible forces in public life.

If code is shaping policy, then engineers are already shaping governance.

The question is whether they will do so consciously—or by default.

The future will not only be defined by what we build.

It will be defined by how responsibly we build it.



On Purpose & Resilience

“It lives in decisions, in leadership, in mentorship, and in the courage to persist when the path is unclear.”

- Engineering has never been only about structures, systems, or formulas. It is about **people**—who they are, what they carry, and how they choose to shape the world around them.
- As women in engineering, we are not only participants in systems—we are contributors to their **redesign**. We bring perspective, depth, and innovation that expand the meaning of what engineering can be.
- Our work extends for beyond blueprints and calculations—it lives in the decisions we make, the lives we influence, and the futures we help build.

“Behind every professional title is a human story shaped by choices, challenges, and conviction.”

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APWEN NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S EVENTS DIARY



There are moments in life when character is tested not by applause, but by accusation.

I was twelve.

The barracks was not just where we lived; it was a climate of discipline, rumors, salutes, and sudden departures. Military coups echoed through the country like distant thunder. Fathers vanished overnight on missions. Mothers became fortresses.

My father served.
My mother strengthened.
We endured.

Then came the summons.

Children in the barracks had broken into secured zones. Military property had gone missing. Officers were recalled from mission. My father was among them.

In a hall thick with authority, he was told:

“Your daughter Victoria is among those guilty.”

He had just returned from duty. He knew nothing of the incident. Yet he said something that unsettled the command more than rebellion ever could:

“I know my daughter. She is not guilty.”

You do not question a commandant.
You do not oppose “facts.”
You do not embarrass authority.

But he did.

Not because he was defiant.

Because he understood character.

They brought me from school. Witnesses testified. Names were mentioned. Faces I had never seen were called my “friends.”

When it was my turn, I asked one simple question to one of the girls:

“What is my name?”

She could not answer.

Truth does not tremble.
Truth stands.

Days became weeks. The accusation collapsed. I was innocent.

But the lesson was not about innocence.

It was about recognition.

My father could stake his honor on my character

because he knew me. He had studied my habits, my discipline, my spirit. He trusted earned identity—not rumor.

And that is why this review is not merely about a book.

It is about industry.

It is about loyalty.

It is about merit.

THE REFINERY MEN WHO CAN SMELL HEAT

In 2022, shortly before he was forced into early retirement, I had a conversation with a refinery veteran—I will call him Mr. Rextos.



We spoke about contracts worth sums so vast they felt fictional. Foreign refurbishments. Imported expertise. AI engineers replacing seasoned hands.

He said quietly:

“Bikkie... I know the refinery.”

Not as an employee.
But as a man knows his wife.

He continued:

“We are called refinery workers. But we are the only ones not trusted in its refurbishment.”

He described engineers who could detect friction before damage. Who could tell from vibration whether a fault lay in the road or in the engine. Who knew how a turbine should sound at every speed.

And as he spoke, I remembered Michael Reynolds, the engine-driver described by Parton — the man whose ear, nose, and instinct were instruments of mastery.

Parton wrote of such men as possessed by a “master passion.” Engineers who knew their machines so intimately that they could detect the faintest irregularity before catastrophe.

They were not political workers.

They were craftsmen.

WHAT PARTON TAUGHT ME

James Parton did not write about politicians. He wrote about economic builders—men who forged industries with skill, obsession, and discipline.

From inventors to toolmakers, the lesson was constant:

Self-reliance builds crowns.

Skill without dedication is empty.

Ambition without knowledge is dangerous.

Mastery is intimate.

The true captain of industry is not the loudest voice in the boardroom.

It is the quiet expert who knows when a bearing is overheating before smoke appears.

Parton's “model engineer” could:

Hear deviation.

Smell friction.

Feel imbalance.

Predict failure.

That is mastery.

WHEN MERIT IS REPLACED BY FAVOR

An institution that ignores its masters commits slow sabotage.

When those who have labored for decades are bypassed because of proximity, politics, or pedigree, something deeper than morale is damaged. Institutional memory is erased. Trust fractures. Excellence retreats. Camouflage becomes the order of the day.

Merit is not sentimental.

It is structural.

If a refinery is complex, then experience is capital.

If machinery is intricate, then knowledge is security.

To replace earned competence with convenience is to silence the very captains who keep the vessel afloat.

The saddest part of my 2022 conversation was not frustration.

It was resignation.

“They will not listen,” he said.

But history teaches something else.

Industries rise when mastery is honored.

They decay when wisdom is sidelined.

FOR ENGINEERS, STUDENTS, AND LEADERS

Captains of Industry is compulsory reading not because it is historical—but because it is prophetic.

For engineers:
Technical skill alone is not enough. You must know your system so deeply that it becomes instinct. You must pursue continuous learning. You must cultivate a master passion.

For students:
Aspiration without knowledge is fantasy.
Knowledge without skill is theory.
Skill without discipline is waste.

For leaders:
Promotion is not charity; it is the recognition of earned mastery.
Institutions that reward loyalty over competence, or witch-hunting over industry, may survive politically—but they will not thrive technically. And even if they survive politically, can they truly be sustainable? The answer is clear: they are not.

THE SMELL OF OVERHEATED STEEL

There are captains in every refinery, every workshop, every laboratory.

They can smell when a capsule overheats before rupture fills the air.
They can detect imbalance before vibration becomes disaster.
They can prevent catastrophe long before consultants write reports.

The question is not whether they exist.

The question is whether we recognize them.

My father recognized me.

Parton recognized the craftsmen.

Will institutions recognize their own

captains?

FINAL LESSON

This is not a book about wealth.
It is about worth.
Not about power.
About proficiency.
Not about titles.
About mastery.

To every engineer, every seasoned worker, every overlooked expert:

You are the true captains of your industry.
And to every institution:

Ignore your captains at your own peril.

#VoiceOfAsher
Copy of Book :
Captains of Industry
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On Breaking Boundaries

“ Leadership is not about creating followers; it is about creating more leaders. ”

- Engineering has never been only about structures, systems, or formulas. It is about people—who they are, what they carry, and how they choose to shape the world around them.
- As women in engineering, we are not only participants in systems—we are contributors to their redesign. We bring perspective, depth, and innovation that expand the meaning of what engineering can be.
- Our work extends far beyond blueprints and calculations—it lives in the decisions we make, the lives we influence, and the futures we help build.

“ May this journey inspire you to see beyond boundaries, to embrace your identity without compromise, and to recognize influence wherever you stand. ”

Limits are often imagined long before they are real. The journey across aerospace, tech, and exploration challenges us to rethink what is possible for women in STEM.

We ask what it means to belong in spaces where women are still underrepresented, and how resilience becomes a form of innovation in itself.

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THE FUTURE IS NOT WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED. IT IS WAITING TO BE ENGINEERED.

The future will not arrive by chance, nor will it unfold passively before us. It will be shaped—deliberately, intelligently, and courageously—by those who choose to build it.

For women engineers, this is both an invitation and a responsibility. Every design, every system, every line of code, and every structure carries within it the possibility of transformation. Engineering is no longer just about solving technical problems; it is about shaping human possibility.




As this edition has shown, leadership is not reserved for a few. It emerges wherever vision meets action—where young girls decide to pursue science, where engineers choose ethics over convenience, and where professionals commit to lifting others as they rise.

The future is already in motion.
What remains is who will shape its direction.

**And increasingly, it is being
engineered by women.**

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