

**1** Maybe there's a psychological need of people in the West to have Africa be a certain way. And it can be an unconscious need, because Africa for so long has been the place you go to help, that, you know, it's a place where you can feel good about yourself for helping.

**2** I think many of the stories about Africa are still... very much about the stereotypes I think if you look at the way that Africa is covered in the Western press there's been a bit of an improvement but but many of them are still largely about: 'Africans are helpless' 'Africans don't really have a voice', you know, that sort of thing. What would I recommend? More stories. We just... we need more stories. The more stories we have, the more likely we are to challenge those very simple stereotypes.

**3** It depends on the day. Some days I wake up and I'm very optimistic another days I woke... I wake up and I just think 'oh god everything is going down'. I think there will be change but I also think that change is incremental. I don't think that change will be, ahn, overnight and complete. I think change is going to take time and slow steps and, for me, what matters is that those steps continue to move forward, right? Because what worries me sometimes is that if there's a bit of progress and there's a backlash and then we go back. That if, for example, women get political power that suddenly there might be a backlash and suddenly people won't want to vote for women to go to office, that kind of thing. That's what I fear. But I think, in general, I'm mostly optimistic, I am. I really believe that people can change.

**4** I think the participation of the youth is essential, it's crucial. One thing I feel strongly about in the continents is that we need to stop... yeah... We need to let young people have opportunities, we need to stop infantilizing them. We need to stop... talking about young people: 'let's do it, somehow they're not capable'. Now, if you look back 50 years, there are many leaders in Africa who were in their thirties. But today there's a sense in which leadership belongs to people who are 75, right? So I think it's important to... to let young people have opportunities, be more active in politics. For exemple, right now in Nigeria there's this debate about people being too young to run for office, which I think is silly, right? I think it's partly because as a continent we're very respectful of age, you know, older age. Which I think is quite a lovely thing, but we can have that and also encourage young people to be involved and... for me, I think particularly politics, but also, you know, just encouraging young people to start their own businesses, that sort of thing, but... but to be politically active, to... to run for office.

**5** So, there's some things that I think about and only an igbo expression can capture it, and there are other things that... igbo can't. There's... Sometimes, for me, complexity is better captured in igbo. Ahn... Igbo is, ahn... igbo has a... igbo has a deep poetry to it, in a way that English doesn't. But, but really for me both languages are just such a part of me that sometimes I don't even think I'm aware of what language I'm thinking in.

**6** Igbo? Yes, I would like to publish in Igbo and, actually, I will. But the... I think that the sad reality, for me... and if I did that it would be more of a decision that it's always would be sentimental and be about my emotional attachment to Igbo and it wouldn't really be about a readership. Because, sadly, many igbo people cannot read igbo. Because many igbo people are not educated in igbo, they... they can hardly write it, they don't really read it well. We don't have a thriving igbo literature because igbo people mostly read English. There isn't a practical reason, right? To publish in igbo but it's something I want to do because... because it matters to me, because it's a language I love and love to speak, it's a language that I'm teaching my daughter to speak. if the language that's still very much spoken, I mean, we're still very alive and vibrant but not... not in the literary sense. Not... not in terms of reading and writing, but speaking, yes.

**7** Obviously, as a writer I think language matters intensely. I also think that sometimes when you are able to name something, I mean, there's power in naming, so that you're able to name something can sometimes be a starting point for action. And, ahn, you know, there's power in language. Language just isn't language, it's also a repository of power.

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