



raised

TO THE POWER OF **RED**

# We can't believe it!

It's almost impossible to believe it – it's been 10 years since the brand RED has come alive, from a small dream of four young people who turned away from a boring stage play at the Muson Centre to discuss the future they wanted to see – for the global media, for the Nigerians youth coming into their own, and for themselves.

There are many for whom that journey begins with our flagship brand, The Future Awards Africa, which first edition held in 2006. But for us, it started in the smaller media brands we had begun to build across media before then.

There were many who didn't understand it, who couldn't see what we saw. Then it was so obvious to us, we couldn't understand why they couldn't understand. The media wasn't a boring staid tool only deployed in one way. The media was... everything! It could transform societies, bring down systems, rebuild whole communities, it could... sometimes literally, change the world!

Time has clarified our vision, and confirmed that, uhm, we weren't crazy after all! It was possible! We could build a media brand that extended the boundaries, banished the lines that only limited the imagination, one that could go beyond just telling stories, to spreading action, to solving actual problems, to transforming the world we met.

The media in this century, we have always insisted, can no longer be a by stander. We are proud to have stayed true to that vision, we are thrilled to see the world take this message across our global trail of almost-100 countries, and we are excited to embrace what the future holds.

Because, yes, 10 years is indeed a big deal. And that's why we celebrate. But in truth, 10 years is only a reminder. That we have only just started. Africa has over 1 billion – and we're determined to reach, engage and inspire every single one of them, every single day.

Adebola Williams & Chude Jideonwo  
Lagos, Nigeria  
August 2015



# The year of The Future Awards

In 2005, RedSTRAT Communications, our communication company was born. It was registered only as a business name.

It also had no bank account.

The reason it had no bank account, was because... we had no money.

We had no savings, we had no loans, we had no investments, we had no prospectives; we had nothing. We chuckle these days when we hear young people waiting for 'start-up capital' – that did not even occur to us. We didn't ask money to begin from our parents, because what we wanted to do was so radical, so different, so unusual that we didn't want to risk their funds.

We wanted to build a media company that could reach millions of young people. It would shatter convention – it would provide both media content and provide communication services; meanwhile everyone else we had seen wouldn't mix both in a formal setting.

It would not be entertainment and sports but not as an end in itself, deploying that only to focus on the issues that ultimately mattered most to the everyday lives of young people – enterprise, governance, faith, activism, and the academia.

Think about it? At a time when the prevailing was that you needed music and movies only to reach young people – in a time long before our 'I represent Naija' campaigns had gone viral and we had invited people through Enough is Enough Nigeria to plan the first national youth-led protest in a generation, long before we had the Co-Creation hub had begun a trend – we were seeking to build a media brand that would reward people for 'advocacy', for 'business', for 'writers' for 'science and technology'.

Even more strangely, this awkward company we were building with, literally, nothing would target young people, in a time in this country when there was yet nothing like a 'youth segment' and the media and conferences had not begun to speak of 'youth markets'.

We didn't have an office (later that year the late Efere Ozako, God bless him forever, allowed us share his space), we shared the computer of one of us, printed in the house of another and sat for meetings in whatever eateries we could find. Our official address was a P.O. Box!

We started our vision with zero. And with zero naira.

The oldest of us was 19.

No one had ever before done what we were trying to do.

But then we asked ourselves then: if not us, who? If not now, when?



## The year of Rubbin' Minds

We had an idea – connecting young people together was at the core of who we were. We didn't like the rich-poor divide that we see, we didn't like the North-South divide that we met, we were fans of the Diaspora-Homegrown dichotomy that made young Nigerians want to leave their homeland for ... anywhere but here.

So we built the brand called 'Rubbin Minds' as an events brand. Its vision was huge, and since The Future Awards first edition got no cash sponsor, and we were running on little but passion, we started with small events. Those small events did something that didn't exist before – young people from all backgrounds, not just people like them, meeting themselves at monthly events at the swankiest venues in Lagos.

Children of governors who had just returned to Nigeria were meeting up with those whose parents sold dried fish in Egbeda. Ivy league graduates with summa cum laude degrees were having conversations about the future with Ogun State University undergraduates, musicians were meeting with bankers. Networking like that wasn't happening everywhere else – many of the groups that emerged from those meetings have gone on to change many segments of Nigerian society.

We wanted to take this format and reach hundreds of thousands through an event to be covered live. So we met with John Momoh, chairman of Channels Television. We met him with a vision – to make Rubbin' Minds a quarterly event covered live on television, we came out with what is now television's longest running youth talk show.

It was young people, talking to young people, about young people – talking politics and business, passions and travel, the movie business and art exhibitions. We prided ourselves on the fact that, in a few months, we had interviewed all the young people that made Nigeria tick – from musician Asa to author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Like we still say till this day, even as Rubbin' Minds (now anchored by Ebuka Obi-Uchendu remains the nation's number one talk show for young people); you've never young people talk like this before.





# The year of the Keynote Speaker

In 2008, The Future Awards evolved, securing proper corporate sponsorship for the first time.

But that wasn't the real milestone.

The year before, Chude had written an email to the no-nonsense Minister of Education, Obiageli Ezekwesili. That sounds so simple, except oyure Nigerian and then you understand that Ministers, are demi-Gods. They are not in the habit of receiving mails from 20-year-olds, and certainly they didn't respond.

In this case, this was one of the 'Dream Team', a set of 5 of Nigeria's most powerful ministers. She was also a global brand as co-founder of Transparency International.

Chude certainly didn't expect a response to his mail. But he did. It wasn't just a mail. It was an enthusiastic mail. She believed in what we were doing, she was going to support what we were doing, and yes she would like to meet with us.

In 2008, alongside about 10 of our winners, we flew to the Federal Capital Territory to meet Mrs. Ezekwesili. We proceeded to have the most incredible evening having a conversation about youth, about innovation and creativity.

Mrs. Ezekwesili has gone on from that random mail to become the single biggest moral and every-other-way supporter of RED, but then, that single move was enough – it validated our vision, it affirmed our mission and it refreshed our value proposition.

So it was a no-brainer that when we decided to begin a tradition of Keynote Speakers at the annual awards, Ezekwsili (who, by then, had become Vice President of the World Bank, for Africa) was our first choice.

She agreed, and on 13 January 2008 kick-started a tradition that has inspired millions across the world, as well as kickstarted a trend amongst events within Nigeria.









## The year of the Office

Up until 2009, we were still operating out of a borrowed office (sharing an office with the brand Campus Ovation), but thankfully we had begun to get real revenue, proper corporate sponsorship and finally having some income over expenses.

We however formalised a tradition that has continued to this: to function as a not-for-profit dedicated only to our mission, even where we were legally permitted. We focused on ensuring that our income was all went back to expanding our mission, reaching more young people, delivering more value.

After a retreat in Accra, Ghana, we decided it was time to get a proper office, and then finally get a team of staff.

A few minutes after we decided, the company moved to acquire an office that soon became a thriving hub for young leaders and youth-friendly brands to congregate, as well as a home for harnessing the creativity and flair of its staff. Since all three of us founders lived in Surulere, and two of us went to school at the Univeristy of Lagos, it was a natural decision: our offices were in Surulere.

We also began a tradition we continue to this day: all of our first hires were young people, born, bred and educated in Nigeria, all under the ages of 25.

As we write, over 80 per cent of our team is aged 30 and below, including the founders and the chief executive officer, by choice

We have over 75 full time team members at the moment that make up #TeamRED. But then hiring just 3 staff was a big deal. A huge deal. It was a defining moment for us. We were assembling a team that believed in our vision enough to commit their lives to it. Because we swore never to owe a salary in an industry (still) rife with that - a promise we have kept to this day - it meant we were committed to ensuring this vision lived. To us, it meant we were finally ready for business.









# The year we came into our own

In 2010, purely by accident, we extended our frontiers.

The Future Awards that year arrived after we kicked off town hall meetings across six states of Nigeria and then Ghana, Johannesburg and the United Kingdom – meeting young Nigerians across the world, lifted by corporate sponsorship of over 1,000 percent. In 2010, the Keynote Speaker was Managing Director of the World Bank, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. It was during her speech that she opened the eyes and ears of Nigeria, by revealing information that was, surprisingly already in the public domain!

Via the CIA World Factsbook, 70 percent of Nigerians, she revealed, were below the age of 30.

Like Ezekwesili before her, the speech went viral across the media and especially across the time social media had become a national reality. Young people discussed this previously little known fact with excitement – We were the majority?! Imagine what we could do with those numbers!

It so happened that the moment was waiting for the message. At that time, the Nigerian President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua had disappeared from country after an illness that later took his life. In his absence, the nation had no leader and was held hostage by what many called a cabal.

Chude travelled out of Nigeria almost two weeks for a working vacation after the awards, expecting that of course, by the time he returned all would be normal in a country of many unfortunate events. Sadly, by the time he returned not only was the President still missing, but the fuel queues had gotten worse. In addition to that, terrorists had gone on a rampage in Jos, taking the lives of hundreds, and the nation was generating its lowest amount of megawatts in years.

Young people were mad – ironically, while they vented only on social media, the nation's 'elders' including Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, business teacher Pat Utomi and pastor Tunde Bakre leading thousands to protest the madness on the streets of Abuja.

On the day after Chude returned, at a meeting to review The Future Awards, the central working committee included Ohimai Atafo, Alexander Yangs and Shade Ladipo. The conversation wasn't about the awards that day, it was about Nigeria.

Before that, Chude had asked Shade on the drive: Why weren't young people speaking out? Why weren't we the ones on the streets? How could our complaints end on Facebook and our Blackberries? We should be on the streets, we should make our voices heard, we were the majority! Shade's response sealed it: there was no equivocation, no doubt, no questions. "Yes," she said. "Let's go on the streets."

5-1, The Future Awards committee decided to suspend its activity ("An award won't solve this particular problem," Adebola cracked) and we went to work.

Before that week in February ended, an email had gone from Chude to his friends, convening the EnoughisEnough protests. The email was memorably titled 'Where is the outrage?!'

At consecutive meetings at our office and the office of our partners the AfterSchool Graduate Development Center (run by a mentor, Detoun Ogwo), we presented two name options for the organisation: thanks to a deciding argument from writer Cheta Nwanze, we decided on the name 'Enough is Enough'.

Within a few weeks and on Chude's 25th birthday, the first rally drew almost a thousand young people to the streets of Abuja where they began a march to the National Assembly, calling on it to immediately operationalize the rule of law in the absence of our president.

Confronted by military police, the ensuing battle led to the young people pushing through the barricades, and led to iconic images of youth protest and power that hit newswires across the world.

The protests inspired other smaller actions across the country, including a centrally organised Lagos protest a month later.

It was the first time social media was used as a primary tool for activist action in Nigeria, the first time a Nigerian cause trended globally on Twitter, and saw the first time Nigerian celebrity including TIME 100 Most Influential People in the world, Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde, Stella Damasus, Omawumi, Audu Maikori and others joining the popular protest.

It was the biggest demonstration yet of our belief in the power of the media – to go beyond telling stories, to driving action, to owning the agenda; to causing real change. Everything changed after that.

Our vista moved to governance and advocacy, our programmes reached into politics where before it had cautiously avoided. Enough is Enough Nigeria morphed into an independent organisation co-founded by the youth and youth-led organisations we had convened and has grown into a force of nature, driving issues across the Nigerian space.

But it was incredible to see where this came from – the media. Specifically, social media. The newspapers and magazines that had refused to give us support before the protests had the protests on their front pages the days after. Young people had made it clear – it would no longer be business as usual.

That year, was also a landmark as the company, emboldened by its impact, leapt into the future with another milestone.

On 15 August, we launched our full scale media content brand, Y!. The Y! bouquet included Y! Magazine, Y! Online (YNaija), Y! Events and Y! TV. Described by the Founders as “the high priest of the youth culture,” the contours of the kind of company we had always wanted to be were fully forming.









# The year of the President

In 2011, the Nigerian Presidency invited us to host a dialogue to prepare a High-Level Document for Youth Engagement in Governance for the Next 10 Years.

It was the first of many direct high-level governance engagements to come from The Future Project, which was our fully focused development arm. It came from our decision in 2010 that we couldn't drive the media to see the change we sought without taking the risk of tackling governance and the causes we were passionate about frontally.

After the High-Level Dialogue which held over the course of four days in Lagos, Nigeria, one of us had a conversation with the Strategy Adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan to hold an interview with him, for the young people across the country to have him answer questions directly about the issues we had just discussed.

The editors of our magazine had pitched the idea, and it was something we immediately knew we had to do.

Unfortunately, the President's men said no. And thus began to three month pursuit to secure the interviews. We heard nothing from his team throughout that period.

In March of that year, the President instead hosted a television interview with the musician D'banj that was widely panned. The next day one of us received a call from the Villa. It was ready to make the proper, incisive interview that would ask the questions that mattered, happened.

Thus came the historic presidential interview with Y! Magazine.

It was the first time a West African lifestyle magazine had interviewed the Nigerian president, and the first time a youth magazine had interviewed a sitting president in the entire sub-region.

It injected our mission and our team with an excitement and energy that we couldn't possibly have imagined.

On July 1, 2011 we took another bold step. We launched a new company, with a new management board, that best expressed our spirit, our mission and our passion.

Red Media Africa.

RED.









## The year we left Lagos

Just before 2012, we noticed something significant: the governance space as it concerned young people had become intensely poisonous. Debate was coarse, engagement was bitter, and the media wasn't paying attention or doing much.

We decided to launch a media brand: 'The Nigeria Symposium for Young & Emerging Leaders'.

But just before that, there was #OccupyNigeria – the fuel subsidy removal protests that shook the entire nation, and almost brought down its government. We were front and center of the protests, Adebola and the team helping to ensure young people, especially from the middle class joined the protests in Lagos.

Beyond that, #OccupyNigeria helped clarify our brands. Because, naturally, our online media brand was focused on the protests (because young people were focused on the protests), we got into the mix of it: clarifying, interpreting and framing the issues, with a team led by Chude, assisted by one of the media eco-systems now brightest stars, Bankole Oluwafemi.

After the protests, YNaija.com morphed into the Internet Newspaper for Young Nigerians haven't found its natural habitat.

But #OccupyNigeria made it even more urgent to deliver the Symposium – to bring together and then crystallise the conversations young people were having and the actions they would have to take, together.

The event brought together Obiageli Ezekweasili as well as the Minister of Youth Development, Bolaji Abdullahi and the governors of Ekiti and Rivers, Kayode Fayemi and Rotimi Amaechi.

There, our vision caught the attention of the Rivers governor. After engaging the co-founders on a spirited debate over the motivations, intentions, strategies and sustainability of the overall vision, he decided he would support it, and that it was crucial to bring that message of change, inspiration and action to the young people of Rivers.

This, The Future Awards was hosted outside of Lagos, for the first time in its seven-year history. We took the awards alongside with our direct-empowerment platform The Future Enterprise Support Scheme to “stimulate the young people, open their imagination, bring those role models to them. They wanted us to generate that swell of activity that The Future project had driven in Lagos, and in Abuja into Rivers.

Clearly, we realised, it was time for this vision to truly break boundaries.

 2013

## The year we reached across Africa

In 2013 The Future Project decided it was time to extend its influence across the continent. Aligning with RED's vision to be the go-to company in reaching the highest number of Africans at any given time, the TFP opened nominations to qualified young people outside Nigeria.

We received hundreds of nominations from across the continent leading to the selection of Ashish Thakkar, Africa's youngest billionaire as 'The young person of the year'.

This was the year a hundred members of The Future Awards Africa alumni were hosted at the Presidential Villa in Abuja- this is in recognition of their efforts at inspiring leadership among the younger generation of Africans.





# 2014.

## The year of Africans for Africa

(Ebola Campaign)

As we prepared for The Future Africa Awards in 2014, the Ebola outbreak had continue to spread beyond control and the need was paramount for a collective response from all Africans. There was the capacity that TFAA had built over the years and the time was just right to maximize our reach of over 10 million young Africans, for Africa.

We launched #StopEbola, a campaign against the outbreak, with several influential celebrities across the West African region as ambassadors. At the forefront of this campaign were the TFAA Young Person of the Year 2013, Ashish Thakkar, actresses, Genevieve Nnaji and Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde as well as Nigerian-born international soul singer, Asa.

Over a million young people across Africa were inspired to act against the virus and support the World Health Organization (WHO) by donating a minimum of \$25 and providing effective social media campaigns.

Funke Akindele

JOIN ME. **#StopEBOLA.**

40 million Africans are at RISK !  
#TheFutureAwardsAfrica  
is pooling 1million young Africans to get involved.  
SUPPORT THE UN AND WHO THROUGH THE  
EBOLA RESPONSE FUND

Go to [www.stopebola.com](http://www.stopebola.com) now

the future awards africa  
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Timi Dakolo

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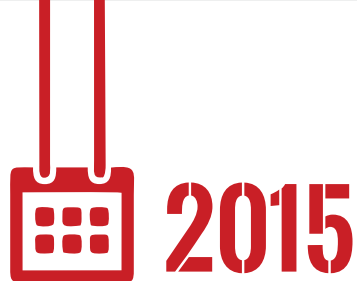












## The year of Change

In 2015, we were on contract to handle the campaign communication of President Muhammadu Buhari. We had over the years, built the reputé to deliver on communication goals. There was the goal – ‘Change’ was imminent and it had to be us, to do the same thing that had become an attitude - make it happen.

Through a sustained digital and traditional media campaign that included photos, videos, outdoor media adverts and other content, we executed a strategy stretching simultaneously across 30 states and reshaped the public image of PMB as one that is accessible, humane and dedicated.

We managed perception and conversation for the crucial youth demographic by driving online conversation through digital posters, hashtags and campaigns that became viral sensations.

Within three-and-a-half months, we organically grew one million followers across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, and had built a large audience of people who wanted change, with passion.

We delivered, as obvious.

## ...and our Anniversary Year

10 years in the Nigerian media space!

We organized The RED Summit. It would be rightly dubbed West Africa’s biggest omni-media talk shop - a 3-day event to bring together media experts from online, broadcast, print journalism, Public Relations and advertising to deliberate on the state of the industry and its future in the African continent.

With the theme ‘The media in a time of flux’, it was organized in collaboration with Troyka Holdings and The School of Media and Communications, Pan-Atlantic University.

“The journey continues” would suffice. “A new journey begins” would do as well.