



*Growing Greatness*

AFRICA  
BRAND LEADERSHIP  
ACADEMY

SHARPENING  
THE MINDS THAT  
BUILD BRANDS  
THAT BUILD AFRICA



## *Contents*

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<i>3</i>
<b>WHY WE MATTER</b>	<i>5</i>
<b>OUR VALUES</b>	<i>7</i>
<b>FOUNDING</b>	<i>7</i>
<b>IMPACTFUL REAL-WORLD</b>	<i>8</i>
<b>LEARNING</b>	
<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<i>9</i>
<b>PROGRAMMES</b>	<i>10</i>
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>	<i>11</i>
<hr/>	
<b>ACADEMIC COMMITTEE</b>	<i>13</i>
<b>FACULTY</b>	<i>13</i>
<b>LIBRARY</b>	<i>13</i>
<b>EVENTS</b>	<i>13</i>
<b>CONTACT</b>	<i>14</i>

# INTRODUCTION

Many studies and experience have shown that brands can shape a nation's image, while a nation's image can also significantly influence purchase decisions. In *Brand New Justice*, Simon Anholt argues that "branding is a powerful tool for economic development, and can make a worthwhile contribution to the growth of places." Consequently, as Wally Olins established in *Trading Identities*: "As countries develop their 'national brands' to compete for investment, trade and tourism, global companies are using nation-building techniques to achieve internal cohesion across cultures, becoming ever more involved in providing public services like education and health."

Therefore, there is no doubt that brands will play a pivotal role in the differentiation and development of Africa.

But to build great brands in Africa, brand builders need to understand the African consumer not just where they are but where they come from carrying their own dreams and the dreams of their villages. In that way, as Feyi Olubodun posits in *The Villager: How Africans Consume Brands*, "the African village can no longer be viewed as a physical space, but a psychological construct that defines the filters through which African consumers engage with and consumes brands," and the African consumer "ultimately as the economic portal of their communities and nations."

**AFRICA BRAND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY [ABLA] IS AN AFRICA-FOCUSED, POST-GRADUATE ACADEMY OF BRAND LEADERSHIP. OUR AIM IS TO IGNITE THE ABILITY OF AMBITIOUS INDIVIDUALS AND VISIONARY ORGANISATIONS TO CREATE THE NEXT GENERATION OF MEANINGFUL BRANDS THAT HAVE THE POWER TO TRANSFORM AFRICA AND INSPIRE THE WORLD.**

**INSPIRED BY THE  
AFRICAN UNION  
AGENDA 2063 VISION  
OF AN INTEGRATED,  
PEACEFUL AND  
PROSPEROUS  
AFRICA, ABLA AIMS  
TO CONTRIBUTE TO  
THAT AGENDA BY  
SHARPENING THE  
MINDS THAT BUILD  
THE BRANDS THAT  
WILL GROW THE  
GREATNESS OF  
THE CONTINENT.**



**ABLA is tailored  
for executives,  
entrepreneurs and  
the next generation  
of leaders building  
brands and  
businesses in Africa.**

Our programmes are developed and delivered by respected and experienced global Africans leaders who are universally recognised as experts, thought leaders, award-winning authors and practitioners in Africa.

ABLA programmes are structured to provide a dynamic mix of independent, experiential and live instruction to strengthen brand leadership capabilities and excellence across Africa.

**ABLA IS A HYBRID PRIVATE HIGHER  
EDUCATION PROVIDER WITH HUBS  
IN KEY AFRICAN ECONOMIC CAPITALS.**

*Photography by Trevor Stuurman, South Africa.  
Huta Chair by Ethnik Africa, Nigeria.*

© ABLA is a protected Trademark

# WHY WE MATTER

**INSPIRING BRAND  
LEADERSHIP THAT  
BUILDS AFRICA'S  
IMAGE, IDENTITY  
AND PROSPERITY**

**Out of Africa reborn must come  
modern products of human economic  
activity, significant contributions to  
the world of knowledge, in the arts,  
science and technology, new images  
of an Africa of peace and prosperity  
- President Thabo Mbeki at the  
United Nations University, 1998**

**As established, throughout history,  
brands have shaped perceptions of the  
image and identity of people, products  
and places. Brands have become the new  
world's repository of value and a critical  
lever of competitiveness and engine and  
barometer of economies.**

**Brands shape the image, reputation and  
competitiveness of nations.**

There is no doubt that brands such as Coca Cola, Nike and Amazon have built America's identity as an entrepreneurial and innovative nation. Mercedes Benz, Porsche and Audi have built Germany's engineering reputation. Chanel, Hermes and Louis Vuitton have built France's style brand, and Sony, Seiko and Panasonic have built Japan's precision brand reputation.

World-class African brands can become the vector of the image, reputation and competitiveness of Africa.

**From World Cup euphoria to Covid-19  
recession.**

In the midst of the euphoric and successful staging of the first FIFA World Cup in Africa in 2010, internal pride and admiration of Africa was arguably at its highest. At the same time African brands enjoyed their most dominant position in the inaugural Brand Africa 100: Africa's Best Brands barometer.

When the Brand Africa 100 survey and ranking premiered in 2010/11, Africa's economic growth was at 6,6%. During that period African brands accounted for a 34% share of the Top 100 most admired African brands. A decade later, further exacerbated by a global pandemic and economic gloom, the optimism has been tempered. African brands share has declined to their lowest at 13% amid projections of Africa's first recession in 25 years.



**"IN 2025 YOU WILL SEE MORE AFRICAN BRANDS, ESPECIALLY ON THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE."**

**Strive Masiyiwa** – Founder and Chairman,  
Econet Wireless 2015 Brand Africa Lifetime Achievement Laureate.



While the political brands of leaders such as South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah that have contributed positively to the continent's image, there are now growing examples of Africa's potential to build world-class African brands that compete ably with non-African brands in Africa. These brands, such as Nigeria's Dangote, South Africa's MTN and Kenya's Safaricom and Mpesa, contribute to the image of a rising, resilient, entrepreneurial and increasingly confident continent.

With the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) which came into force in 2019, Africa now has the world's largest free trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organization, with a market of 1.2 billion people and a combined GDP of \$3 trillion.

**Building the African continental brand.**

ABLA aims to sharpen the skills and grow the knowledge to build relevant and sustainable brands that respond to African conditions and needs, delivered to global standards, to an increasingly global African consumer in a borderless world.

**ULTIMATELY, ABLA SEEKS TO INSPIRE THE ARCHITECTS OF AFRICAN AND NON-AFRICAN BRANDS IN AFRICA THAT BUILD THE AFRICA CONTINENTAL BRAND.**

# OUR VALUES

**WE ARE INSPIRED BY THE DIVERSITY, ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT AND AUTHENTICITY OF AFRICA, AND DRIVEN BY A DEEP PASSION AND THE PURSUIT OF PURPOSE-LED LEARNING IN ORDER TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON THE CONTINENT AND ITS PEOPLE.**

# FOUNDING

**ABLA was founded in 2010 by global African branding authority, Thebe Ikalafeng, as a vehicle to sharpen the skills required to build brands that respond to African conditions and needs, and to inspire the growth of global African brands. It was originally established as the Brand Leadership Academy and recently transformed to the Africa Brand Leadership Academy [ABLA] to emphasise its Africa focus.**



**In a distinguished corporate career which started at Colgate Palmolive in New York and concluded as chief marketing officer for NIKE for Africa, Ikalafeng won over 75 awards in branding and marketing communication globally.**

He is the founder of the award-winning Brand Leadership Group and has worked on over 100 corporate, nation and political brands across Africa. The Brand Leadership pan-African branding and reputation advisory firm has been recognised by Fin Week Magazine as "Marketing Services Agency of the Year" in 2008 and was inducted into the Rebrand "Hall of Fame" for Excellence in Branding in 2015.

He is the founder of the non-profit Brand Africa [www.brand.africa] initiative to mobilize Africans and the diaspora to proactively drive a brand-led African agenda and the widely regarded and referenced Brand Africa 100: Africa's Best Brands initiative to survey, understand and celebrate leading brands in Africa.

A fellow of the Institute of Directors, he is a non-executive director at South African Tourism, Cartrack Group and WWF South Africa. He has held directorships in the public and private sector, including a 15 years tenure on the board of Mercantile Bank Group, and full terms on the Brand South Africa, Foodcorp and Nike boards, and is a former council member of the Durban University of Technology and advisory council member of the Vega School of Branding Leadership.

Ikalafeng has summited Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, the highest free-standing mountain in the world, and Mount Elbrus in Russia, the highest mountain in Europe. He has travelled to over 100 countries globally, every continent in the world and every country in Africa. This experience has provided him with an advantageous global African perspective on African consumers and building brands in Africa.

Ikalafeng holds BSc. and MBA degrees from Marquette University in the USA, completed executive education at Wits Business School and Harvard Business School and is a Chartered Marketer. He has been recognized by New African Magazine as one of the 100 Most Influential Africans.

Based in Johannesburg, South Africa, he advises, writes and speaks on Africa-focused branding, leadership and related matters.

Ikalafeng drives the ABLA vision, and mobilises and leads the global African network of ABLA educators, supporters and partners.



# OUR APPROACH

# IMPACTFUL REAL-WORLD LEARNING

ABLA offers a holistic approach to teaching, providing you with an engaging real-world learning experience and rich cross-disciplinary curricula. Our approach is designed to enable you to make impactful brand and leadership decisions that address the real challenges of doing business and building brands in a dynamic African environment.

### What sets ABLA apart?

The ABLA learning approach is built around our core PACE principles: Purpose, Africa-focused, Community and Experiential

#### Purpose

ABLA content is designed around imparting knowledge to inspire enduring solutions, with a meaningful impact to move Africa forward.

#### Africa Focused

ABLA utilises a case study approach based on real-world contemporary and classic African case studies and engagement, with practitioners who have real-life experience in building brands and businesses in Africa.

#### Community

Built on an African community characteristic, learning at ABLA is a collaborative, engaging experience enriched by the exchange of ideas with diverse peers who have a global African perspective to problem solving.

#### Experiential

Our lessons are brought to life through immersion in active African consumer environments.



# PARTNERSHIPS

OUR NETWORKS OF PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS AFRICA AND THE WORLD ENABLE US TO DESIGN, DELIVER AND EXCHANGE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMES AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT REFLECT AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTINENT AND THE REAL CHALLENGES OF BUILDING WORLD-CLASS BRANDS IN AFRICA.



BRAND LEADERSHIP<sup>B</sup>



ABLA delivers ready-to-learn and custom cross-disciplinary programmes that blend practical and academic principles to address the challenges of leading brands in Africa.

# PROGRAMMES



## *For Executives*

### **AFRICA BRAND LEADERSHIP EXECUTIVE PROGRAMME**

Leading and managing brands in a diverse and rapidly evolving African environment requires leaders with the intellectual and creative agility to adapt and respond to the specific conditions and needs of the continent and its diverse markets.

The *ABLA Africa Brand Leadership Executive Programme* will inspire and empower executives to recognize and seize opportunities, enabling them to take their organisations to higher levels of growth and success in a dynamic African marketplace.

## *For Next Generation Leaders*

### **POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN BRAND LEADERSHIP**

The *ABLA Post Graduate Diploma in Brand Leadership* programme is designed for the next generation of leaders who want to accelerate their career with practical skills and deep immersion in the continental context to build meaningful and profitable brands in Africa. The programme provides in-depth, cross-disciplinary and experiential insights of building brands and managing projects. The programme blends academic and experiential functional content and personal leadership insights needed to succeed in a diverse and dynamic African environment. A highlight of the programme is that during the term, learners get to work on a real African brand with ambitions of building their brand across borders.

## *For Entrepreneurs*

### **BRAND LEADERSHIP FOR ENTREPRENEURS**

The *ABLA Brand Leadership for Entrepreneurs* is a structured step-by-step programme to guide emerging and established entrepreneurs to build brand-led enterprises and leverage their personal brands appropriately to succeed in a diverse and dynamic African environment. This is where you start if you're ready to fast-track your business brand.

## *For Everyone*

### **SHORT LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

ABLA short-term learning programmes are designed to meet specific needs of learners and organisations who need cutting edge, relevant insights for personal and professional development derived from real-world experience. The programmes are designed to be delivered over short periods to six (6) weeks.

The flagship ABLA Short Learning Programs include *Brand Leadership for the Creative Economy, Brand Leadership for Entrepreneurs, Personal Branding, Nation Branding and Responsible Branding*.

## *For Organisations*

### **CUSTOM PROGRAMMES**

We partner with organisation to develop custom world-class learning interventions rooted in the African context, to address your brand and business challenges, to ignite individual and organisational performance and drive the bottom-line.

ABLA has a structured 5-phase ADAPT™ model for designing and delivering custom training programmes. ADAPT™ is based on our believe that “the only constant is change” and therefore instruction and learning should constantly be adapted to respond to or lead the changes in the marketplace.

ABLA has a structured governance approach based on sound and best practice principles for organizing and managing a higher education institution with a pan-African focus and reach.

# GOVERNANCE

## COUNCIL

**The ABLA Council is the highest decision making body of the Academy.** It is responsible for the good order and overall governing of the Academy. In discharging its role, the Council provides strategic direction and oversight on regulatory compliance, performance, quality of content and instruction, evaluation integrity, maintenance of appropriate financial affairs and institutional reputation in the management of the Academy. The council is not involved in the day-to-day management of the Academy which is delegated to the executive management, led by the Principal, who in turn is accountable to the Council.

**ABLA Council members are respected academics, thought leaders, practitioners and influencers in society, business and academia who bring a wealth of Africa-focused experience and are invested in African progress.**

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

**Thebe Ikalafeng (BSc. MBA. CM(SA),** South Africa  
Founder and Principal

ABLA, Founder and Chairman, Brand Africa and Brand Leadership Group

**Omar ben Yedder (BA. CMA),** Tunisia/UK

Group Publisher and Managing Director

IC Publications: African Business, New African and African Banker

**Rebecca Enonchong (BSc. MSc),** Cameroon/USA  
Founder and CEO

AppsTech and Chairperson, AfriLabs

**Feyi Olubodun (BSc. MBA),** Nigeria

Founder and Managing Partner

Open Squares

**Dr. Puleng Makhoalibe (BSc. MBA. Phd),**

Lesotho/South Africa

Founder and CEO

Alchemy Inspiration

**Tom Sitati (BArch. MA. CIM),** Kenya

Partner, Brand Integrated Consulting

Architect, Lexicon + Ion



## PRESIDENT

**Dr. Eleni Zaude Gabre-Madhin** (Ethiopia) is a globally recognized thought leader and has held senior leadership at the World Bank, the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, UNCTAD in Geneva, and is the founder and former CEO of the highly acclaimed Ethiopia Commodity Exchange (ECX) and LLC, Africa's leader in designing, building, and supporting the operations of commodity exchange eco-systems in frontier markets. She is the founder and chief executive of blueMoon, Ethiopia's first youth agribusiness/agritech incubator and seed investor and promoter of blueSpace, the first full service co-working space company.

Gabre-Madhin has a PhD in applied economics from Stanford University, an MSc in Agricultural Economics from Michigan State University, and BA in economics from Cornell University, and received the Outstanding Dissertation award by the American Agricultural Economics Association in 1999. Eleni was recognized as Devex' 2016 Top 5 Women Global Women of Impact, Newsweek 125 Global Women of Impact 2013, New African 100 Most Influential Africans 2012, and Yara Prize winner 2012, 50 Women Shaping Africa by The Africa Report in 2011, and Ethiopian Person of the Year in 2009.



## CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL

**Professor Tjama Tjivikua** (Namibia) is a retired Namibian academic, former Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia (later rebranded to NUST – the Namibia University of Science and Technology) since inception in 1995 until March 2019. Tjivikua left Namibia in June 1979 to study Chemistry in the United States at Rockland Community College (1979–1980), and then Lincoln University (1980–1983), from which he graduated cum laude.

He then completed an MSc at University of Lowell and a PhD at the University of Pittsburg and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The thesis was on molecular recognition in organic chemistry.

He was a well recognised researcher at that time, and he worked as Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Lincoln University from 1990 to 1995 until he returned to Namibia. He is probably one of the first Namibian to receive a doctorate in the natural sciences, and one of the first doctoral honorees at his age in 2006. He has served on national bodies such as the National Planning Commission (1998–2006), the Namibian Qualifications Authority (1997–present), the Namibia Council for Higher Education (2006–present) and several others.



## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

The ABLA academic committee, under the chairmanship of the Principal, is the highest authority of academics, exercising the power in decision-making, examination, evaluation and consultation on all academic affairs of the Academy to ensure that quality content, teaching and learning remain the utmost priority and aligned with the institutional vision. This Committee formulates the guidelines, rules and regulations of the Academic affairs of the Academy.

## FACULTY

ABLA's faculty are respected thought leaders, practitioners and academics who collectively provide a rich blend of a pragmatic and academic learning environment, bringing a wealth of practical experience and thought leadership at the coalface of building brands in Africa.

## EVENTS

ABLA organizes open events and seminars around the continent to engage with experts, thought leaders and practitioners to build networks and to keep abreast of issues, trends and developments on key matters relating to building brands, reputation management and intellectual property in Africa.

## LIBRARY

As an Africa-focused institution, ABLA's faculty are committed to contributing to thought leadership and providing access to global and African content relevant to and/or shaped around the African context.

The ABLA Library is a repository of selected original or subscribed Africa-focused and relevant global literature, journals, articles, research, lectures, reports and productions on building brands, investing in Africa, doing business in Africa and the African consumer.

The ABLA **Africa Brand Leadership Journal** is the leading and authoritative peer-reviewed journal on Africa-focused brand management and strategy. It is a showcase of best practices and the latest thinking from leading global African experts, thought leaders, academics and industry leaders on building brands in the dynamic and fast evolving African environment.

The ABLA **Africa Brand Leadership Journal** is essential reading for Africa-focused researchers, strategists, academics, executives and intellectual property practitioners teaching, leading and/or managing global African brands.



*For more  
information on ABLA*

info@abla.academy  
www.abla.academy



*Growing Greatness*

AFRICA  
BRAND LEADERSHIP  
ACADEMY

© ABLA, Africa Brand Leadership Academy and Brand Leadership Academy are registered and protected Trademarks.