



# 25 INSPIRING FAMOUS GHANAIS WHO FOUND THEIR VOICE

THROUGH ARTS, SPORTS, BUSINESS,  
POLITICS, AND OTHERWISE

MOTRAYL WRITING WORKSHOP "FINDING YOUR VOICE"

*COMPILED BY FRANKA MARIA ANDOH*

# Dr. Ashitey Trebi-Ollennu

Engineer



Dr. Ashitey Trebi-Ollennu, FIET, FRAeS, SMIEEE, PMP, FGA, is the Product Delivery Manager, for the InSight Mars Mission Instrument Deployment System, Instrument Deployment System operations Team Chief and a technical group lead in the Robotic Manipulation & Sampling group at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, where he has been since 1999. Dr. Trebi-Ollennu is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineering and Technology, U. K., and a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, U.K. Senior Member IEEE RAS and IEEE SMC. Dr. Trebi-Ollennu is also a fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. His current research at JPL focuses on Planetary Rovers, Manipulation, Multiple Mobile Robots (Planetary Outpost), Reconfigurable Robots and Man-machine Interaction. Dr. Trebi-Ollennu's research has resulted in more than 95 publications.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashitey\\_Trebi-Ollennu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashitey_Trebi-Ollennu)

## Bozoma "Boz" Saint John **Businesswoman**

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Bozoma A. "Boz" Saint John (née Arthur; born January 21, 1977) is an American businesswoman and marketing executive who is the current chief marketing officer (CMO) at William Morris Endeavor. Previously, she served as chief brand officer (CBO) at Uber until June 2018. Saint John was also a marketing executive at Apple Music until June 2017, after joining the company in its acquisition of Beats Music.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bozoma\\_Saint\\_John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bozoma_Saint_John)

# Lucy Quist

Business leader



Lucy Quist was born in London and is a Ghanaian international business leader. She is a technology professional who advocates for greater participation of young people in STEM for development. Born in London, United Kingdom, to Ghanaian parents Peter and Mary Afriyie, Lucy Quist spent her formative years in both Europe and Africa.[4] She went to Wesley Girls' High School in Cape Coast in Ghana and went on to study at the University of East London, graduating with a first-class honours degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. She holds an MBA from INSEAD in France.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy\\_Quist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy_Quist)

# Alice Annum

Athlete



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice\\_Annum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Annum)

She was tagged as “Baby Jet” due to her remarkable speed game, though currently, Ghana Black Stars footballer Asamoah Gyan goes by the nickname Alice Annum.

Ghana’s first sensational female Olympian sprinter but little known, she won gold at the 1965 All Africa Games (long jump) in Brazzaville, silver at the 1970 Commonwealth Games in Scotland, silver again in both 100 meters and 200-meter races and bronze in the 1974 New Zealand edition; 200-meter section. Also, she pulled it off at three consecutive Olympic Games: 1964 (Tokyo), 1968 (Mexico City) and 1972 (Munich).

# Esther Afua Ocloo

Entrepreneur



“Women must know that the strongest power in the world is economic power.” – Esther Afua Ocloo

Esther Afua Ocloo, who passed away in 2002, would have celebrated her 98th birthday on Apr 18, 2017. She started her entrepreneurial strides by selling fruit juice and marmalade, then ended up operating a bank specifically designed to help women on low incomes. Ms. Ocloo was invited to the first UN World Conference on Women in 1975. As the chairman of the board of directors of Women’s World Banking, she has helped millions of women start and run businesses, helping boost prosperity in countless communities.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esther\\_Afua\\_Ocloo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esther_Afua_Ocloo)

# Farida Bedwei

Software engineer



“Always maintain your integrity even if it is to your short term detriment. It will pay off in the long term.” – Farida Bedwei

For a dreamer and achiever like Farida Bedwei, disability is not an absolute deprivation. The distinguished software engineer co-founded Logiciel; a software systematization outlet operating a cloud software service used by hundreds of micro-finance companies in Africa. She is not one who just got lucky overnight. Farida was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at the age of one, but has dedication, inventiveness, and the persistence to become one of the most powerful women in financial technology.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farida\\_Bedwei](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farida_Bedwei)

# Kwame Akoto-Bamfo

Sculptor



Kwame Akoto-Bamfo is a Ghanaian sculptor. His outdoor sculpture dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Transatlantic slave trade is on display at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice that opened in 2018 in Montgomery, Alabama.[1] His other sculptures include an installation of 1,200 concrete heads representing Ghana's enslaved ancestors in Accra, the capital of Ghana. Called Faux-Reedom, it was unveiled in 2017.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwame\\_Akoto-Bamfo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwame_Akoto-Bamfo)



# June Sarpong MBE

TV presenter

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Bubbly host and TV presenter June Sarpong OBE (born 31 May 1977), who was born in London's East End to Ghanaian parents, is best known for her Cheeky Asides on UK Channel 4's youth program T4. Her parents, both Ghanaian, separated when June Sarpong was seven. At the age of twenty-nine and after six years as a broadcaster, June was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2007 New Year Honors List for "services to Urban Music".

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June\\_Sarpong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_Sarpong)

# Clare-Hope Naa K. Ashitey

Actress



Clare-Hope Naa K. Ashitey (born 12 February 1987) is a British Actress of Ghanaian descent. She has made several movies, including Shooting Dogs (Released in the United States as Beyond the Gates 2005), Children of Men (2006), Exodus (2007), Black Brown White (2011), Candle To Water (2012) and All Is By My Side (2013).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare-Hope\\_Ashitey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare-Hope_Ashitey)

# Kofi Kingston

Wrestler



Kofi Nahaje Sarkodie-Mensah (born August 14, 1981) is a Ghanaian-American professional wrestler signed to WWE, under the ring name Kofi Kingston, where he performs on the SmackDown brand, and is the current WWE Champion in his first reign. He is the first African-born WWE Champion and is also a member of The New Day along with Big E and Xavier Woods.

After graduating college, Sarkodie-Mensah decided to pursue a professional wrestling career. He began performing on the New England independent circuit as a Jamaican wrestler by the name of Kofi Nahaje Kingston.[4] After signing a developmental deal with WWE in 2007, he shortened his ring name to "Kofi Kingston". Kingston debuted in WWE in 2008 using the same Jamaican character as he did on the independent circuit. In late 2009, he stopped being billed from Jamaica and dropped the accent although he kept his ring name. He then started being billed from his home country of Ghana.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofi\\_Kingston](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofi_Kingston)

## Kwabena Frimpong Boateng Surgeon

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Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng is a well-known Ghanaian physician and cardiothoracic surgeon. He was born in 1949. His father Kofi Frimpong had died from heart injuries due to a road traffic accident prior to his birth, so he thought he could help people in similar situations. He established the National Cardiothoracic Center and the Ghana Red Cross Society. He is also the President of the Ghana Heart Foundation and was the Chief Executive Officer of the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra. He is a Christian and he has said that his work on the foundation of the National Cardiothoracic Centre was God's purpose in his life. Frimpong-Boateng and his wife, Agnes, have five children, one of whom is a promising athlete.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwabena\\_Frimpong-Boateng](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwabena_Frimpong-Boateng)

<http://mesti.gov.gh/prof-kwabena-frimpong-boateng/>

# Akwasi Frimpong

Olympian sprinter



Akwasi Frimpong is a Dutch-Ghanaian sprinter, bobsledder, and skeleton athlete. He was born on 11 February 1986. He has won four bronze, four silver, and eight gold medals in various national and international sport events. Frimpong, who was raised in Ghana, moved to the Netherlands at the age of 8 and started running when he was 15. In 2003, he became the Dutch National Junior Champion in the 200 meter sprints, which earned him the nickname ‘Golden Sprint.’ To qualify for the Olympics, Frimpong switched nationalities and sports, and represented Ghana in skeleton. Frimpong qualified for the 2018 Olympics in skeleton by obtaining a near-automatic invitation by virtue of continental representation, being the only athlete representing the African continent in skeleton, despite a low ranking.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akwasi\\_Frimpong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akwasi_Frimpong)

# David Adjaye

Architect

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David Adjaye was born in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The son of a Ghanaian diplomat, David Adjaye lived in Tanzania, Egypt, Yemen and Lebanon before moving to Britain at the age of nine. Upon graduating with a BA in Architecture from London, South Bank University in 1990, he was nominated for the RIBA President's Medals, and won the RIBA Bronze Medal for the best design project produced at BA level worldwide. He graduated with an MA in 1993 from the Royal College of Art. Adjaye was featured in an advertising campaign for British luxury brand Dunhill in 2012. Adjaye has also worked on numerous collaborative projects with his brother Peter Adjaye, a musician.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Adjaye](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Adjaye)

# Idris Elba

Actor



Idrissa Akuna Elba is the son of Winston, a Sierra Leonean man who worked at the Ford Dagenham plant, and Eve, a Ghanaian woman. Elba's parents were married in Sierra Leone and later moved to London. He was born on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1972. He is an English actor, producer, director, musician, DJ, and rapper. He is best known for taking versatile acting roles including Stringer Bell in the HBO series *The Wire*, DCI John Luther on the BBC One series *Luther* and Nelson Mandela in the biographical film *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013). He has been nominated four times for a Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Miniseries or Television Film, winning one and was nominated five times for a Primetime Emmy Award.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idris\\_Elba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idris_Elba)

# Zoe Adjonyoh

Chef



Zoe was born in the late 1970s at her mothers' home based in Essex. Growing up as an only child, she didn't see her mixed race heritage reflected in siblings, people around her, or in popular culture. Her mum loved Ghanaian food, and she used to cook it when her dad wasn't around. According to Zoe, food is her dad's connection to home and she realized early that food was also her connection to that side of her identity. It was also about spending time with her dad. Zoe became an expert at whipping up groundnut soup and plantain, which her friends would beg her to make again and again. By 2010, Zoe had come up with the idea for Ghana Kitchen as a way to fund her creative non-fiction MA, where Zoe found herself writing a memoir about her dad. She has won the 2018 Culinary Iconoclast Award and has published her cookbook Zoe's Ghana Kitchen which features traditional Ghanaian recipes.

<https://www.zoesghanakitchen.co.uk/about-ghana>

<http://gal-dem.com/award-winning-chef-zoe-adjonyoh/>



# Ozwald Boateng

## Fashion Designer

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Ozwald Boateng is a British fashion designer of Ghanaian descent, known for his trademark twist on classic British tailoring and bespoke style. His parents emigrated from Ghana in the 1950s and he was born in 1967 in Muswell Hill, North London. Boateng was inspired by the immaculate suits his father wore, and received his first suit from his mother at the age of eight: a double-breasted in purple mohair. Boateng was commissioned by John Agyekum Kuffuor, former President of the Republic of Ghana, to design and orchestrate a show at the 9th Annual African Union summit in 2007. He has designed bespoke costumes for films including: Hannibal, Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, Tomorrow Never Dies and Rush Hour.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ozwald\\_Boateng](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ozwald_Boateng)

## Sir Paul Boateng Member of Parliament UK

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Boateng was born in Hackney, London on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1951. He is of mixed Ghanaian and Scottish heritage. His family later moved to Ghana when Boateng was four years old. His father, Kwaku Boateng, was a lawyer and Cabinet Minister during Kwame Nkrumah's regime however he was imprisoned without trial for four years. Boateng, then aged fifteen, and his sister, Rosemary, fled to the UK with their mother. He is a British Labour Party politician, who was the Member of Parliament (MP) for Brent South from 1987 to 2005, becoming the UK's first mixed-race Cabinet Minister in May 2002, when he was appointed as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Following his departure from the House of Commons, he served as the British High Commissioner to South Africa from March 2005 to May 2009. He was then introduced as a member of the House of Lords on 1 July 2010.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Boateng](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Boateng)

# Osibisa

Band



Osibisa is an Afrobeat band, founded in London in 1969 by four expatriate Africans and three Caribbean musicians. Their music is a fusion of African, Caribbean, jazz, funk, rock, Latin, and R&B. Osibisa were the most successful and longest lived of the African-heritage bands in London, (alongside such contemporaries as Assagai, Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath, Demon Fuzz, and Noir) and were largely responsible for the establishment of world music as a marketable genre.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osibisa>

# Ama Ata Aidoo

Author



Ama Ata Aidoo, née Christina Ama Aidoo was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1942. She is a Ghanaian author, poet, playwright and academic. She was the Minister of Education under the Jerry Rawlings administration. In 2000, she established the Mbaasem Foundation to promote and support the work of African women writers. Ama Ata Aidoo has won several awards including the 1992 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book (Africa) for her novel *Changes*. The Ama Ata Aidoo Centre for Creative Writing (Aidoo Centre), in Adabraka, Accra, was also named in her honour in March 2017.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ama\\_Atta\\_Aidoo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ama_Atta_Aidoo)

# Boris Kodjoe

Actor

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Boris Frederic Cecil Tay-Natey Ofuatey-Kodjoe was born on March 8th, 1973. He is an Austrian-born actor of German and Ghanaian descent. His namesake is the Russian poet and writer Boris Pasternak. Kodjoe married Nicole Ari Parker on May 21, 2005, in Germany. They both have two children. Boris has starred in many movies including, *Love and Basketball*, *Baggage Claim*, *Addicted*, *Resident Evil*, among many others.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris\\_Kodjoe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Kodjoe)



Michael Kojo Essien is a Ghanaian professional footballer who plays for Sabail in the Azerbaijan Premier League, as a midfielder. He was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1982. He has often been touted as a box-to-box midfielder for his ability to exert energy in supporting both offensive and defensive play, and for his powerful and tough tackling playing style, which has earned him the nickname “The Bison”.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael\\_Essien](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Essien)

# Nana Kofi Acquah

Photographer



Nana Kofi Acquah photographs films and writes across Africa for such clients as Oxfam GB, The Global Fund, Americares, Nike, BBC, The Financial Times, Water Aid, Facebook among others. He is also an assignment photographer for Getty images and a World Press Photo Competition 2019 jury member. His instagram account was listed by Shutterstock as one of the best 100 to follow for photography enthusiasts.

<https://www.nkacquah.com/about/index>

# Blitz the Ambassador

Musician



Blitz the Ambassador originally known as Samuel Bazawule is a Ghanaian-American hip-hop artist, filmmaker, and visual artist based in Brooklyn, NY. He was born in Accra, Ghana in April 1982. While in school, he amassed awards for his visual art, but later developed an obsession with hip hop music after hearing his older brother play the classic Public Enemy album *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*. Drawing on his love for history and social observation, he began to research and write historically-loaded rhymes for which he became famous in school. Bazawule is set to show in the 2019 Whitney Biennial curated by Rujeko Hockley and Jane Panetta.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blitz\\_the\\_Ambassador](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blitz_the_Ambassador)



## **Kofi Annan**      **General Secretary to the UN**

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Kofi Atta Annan was born on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1938. He was a Ghanaian diplomat who served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations from January 1997 to December 2006. Annan and the UN were the co-recipients of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize. He was also the founder and chairman of the Kofi Annan Foundation, as well as chairman of The Elders, an international organization founded by Nelson Mandela. Annan died on the morning of 18 August 2018 in Bern, Switzerland, at the age of 80 after a short illness. The United Nations Postal Administration released a new stamp in memory of Kofi Annan on 31 May 2019.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofi\\_Annan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofi_Annan)

<https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/kofi-annan/>

# Franka Maria Andoh

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*Restaurateur. Writer. Serial Entrepreneur. Food Stylist.*

Do you feel inspired? Want to know more? Check out Franka's website where you can find information about her restaurant, her books, and background!

<https://frankaandoh.com/>