

2025 International Women's Day Celebration **by** **Women in AI (Nigeria)**

March 08, 2025

Francisca Oladipo
Vice-Chancellor
Thomas Adewumi University, Nigeria



**THOMAS ADEWUMI
UNIVERSITY,
OKO, KWARA STATE**
Science | Technology | Medicine



Housekeeping

GRATITUDE

to WAI for the opportunity

#IWD2025

Why the theme "Accelerate Action"

WAI-IWD2025

The untold Stories of WAI
Make it FAIR for WOMEN

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

one crack at a time



**THOMAS ADEWUMI
UNIVERSITY,
OKO, KWARA STATE**
Science | Technology | Medicine

About.Me

Administrator

Thomas Adewumi University

Researcher

Computer Science

Mum



OBJECTIVES

Inspire Through Personal Journey:

To motivate my sisters by sharing my authentic path from humble beginnings to becoming a Vice-Chancellor despite limited mentorship.

Demonstrate Strategic Career Navigation

To provide practical insights on how I successfully navigated male-dominated spaces in academia, breaking multiple glass ceilings through excellence and resilience.

Promote a Mentorship Mindset

Emphasize my philosophy of "being the mentor you wish you had" and "lifting others as you rise."

Humble Beginnings

From a young girl in Ondo State to Vice-Chancellor at Thomas Adewumi University

Parental Influence

- Born to a closely-knitted family of teachers: my parents were my first mathematics teachers and this developed my strong mathematical aptitude which later formed the foundation for my computing career

Early Academic Journey

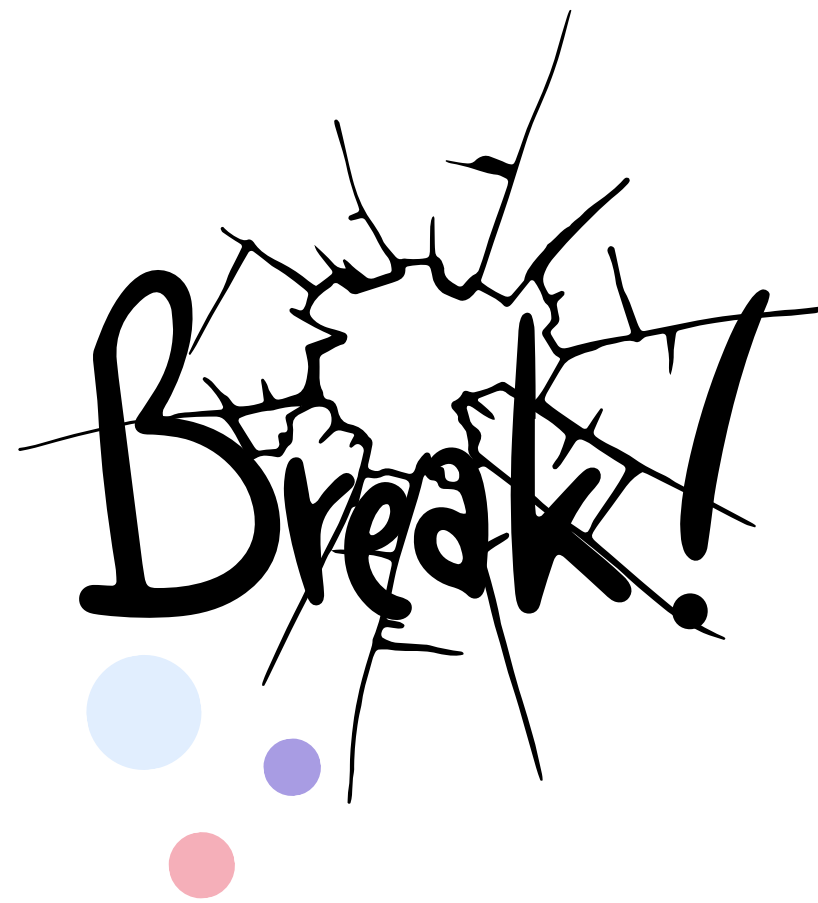
- BSc. Computer Science, NAU, Awka
- Graduate Assistant (2001-2005)
- Pursued MSc and PhD in Computer Science without dedicated mentorship

Challenge

- Navigating academia as a young female researcher

Key Lesson

- Self-motivation is critical when mentorship is absent



Breaking the First Glass Ceiling
one crack at a time...

First

Female HoD of Computer Science

First

Female elected to University Council

Pioneer

Director of RICE (KIU, Uganda)
Director of Quality Assurance (FUL)

First

Among the first set of Nigerians (Africans)
to win the Google exploreCSR in 2022

Challenge

Overcoming skepticism and
bias

Key Lesson

Excellence speaks louder than
prejudice

The journey to AI and Building Research Excellence

not a linear path: **2017** was the turning point

Challenge

Accessing international opportunities in the face of limited resources

- Old school CSC-tist (automata & computability, networking, compiler construction, expert systems technology, number theory, etc)
- Computing research (especially applied) has always been around a certain wave of interests
- PostDoctoral Fellow at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2014)
- As of 2016, SWE Research was the rave
- 2017 HLF Fellowship
- Trained in Machine Learning AI
 - IADS University of Essex, UK
 - Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain (MLSS)
 - University of Oxford (Big data Analytics)

Key Lesson

Seek lessons consistently even when the path is unclear

Some SpringBoards

From 2017 to date

Game Changer: Summer Schools

- **Conference Travel Grants:**
(WiML, Black in AI, WiNLP, ICML, PyCon, etc);
- **AI Summer Schools**
- **Fellowships:** (ACM FaceT, GHC, HLF, etc)
- **Int'l Projects:** (VODAN Africa, Nuffic, OUC initiatives, etc)
- **Microcredentials:** Coursera, MITx, etc
- **Hackathons, Emerging Scholar Awards, etc**

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

one crack at a time



**THOMAS ADEWUMI
UNIVERSITY,
OKO, KWARA STATE**
Science | Technology | Medicine

Some key nudgetts



I'm no motivational speaker

Mentorship is Key

What if there are no mentors

- Develop unshakeable self-belief and vision
- Create your own learning pathways and opportunities
- Build diverse networks beyond traditional structures
- Embrace innovation and continuous learning
- Practice resilience by viewing obstacles as challenges to overcome

Help smoothen the paths

- Lift others as you rise



Message to my WAI Sisters



**The absence of
mentors is not the
absence of
opportunity**

**Build
bridges as
you break
barriers**

**Your
background
doesn't
determine
your future**

Message to my WAI Sisters (contd)

**Learn
continuously,
adapt
consistently**

**Create
supportive
networks
for yourself
and others**

**Excellence
is the most
persuasive
argument**

**Be brave
enough to be
the first, and**



**Generous
enough to
ensure you're
not the last**

● ● ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY



Preparedness





Thank You

PHONE

+2348034725167

ADDRESS

Thomas Adewumi University

EMAIL

francisca.oladipo@tau.edu.ng

WEB

<https://tau.edu.ng/staff.php?i=TAUSSPF001>