

There are thousands of incredible women business owners in Eastern Africa and elsewhere; each with a unique story.

Episode 2: Akinyi Odongo - Akinyi Odongo KENYA™

Akinyi E. Odongo, a passionate promoter of sustainable fashion, is the Founder and Managing Director of Akinyi Odongo KENYA™, a Nairobi-based fashion house. It is an upscale women's and men's clothing line that defines African fashion with a global view. Driven by a desire to fuse rich African traditions with fashion, Akinyi has launched three different businesses in the last 15 years - MEFA Creations (started as a sole proprietorship now a subsidiary of Mefa Art Centre Ltd), MEFA Art Centre Ltd. (teaching art to children and teenagers and currently transitioning to MEFA Institute) and finally just four years ago, Akinyi Odongo KENYA™, launched to tell a positive African fashion story. Akinyi is committed to reviving disappearing traditional fabric treatment techniques and sources fabrics from over 2,000 traditional weavers in Kenya, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso. She is the Founder of Fashion Agenda Africa), through which she mentors thousands of Africa-based youth interested in pursuing professional fashion design. Akinyi's staff is comprised of eleven full time employees and several temporary workers.

What you'll hear in this episode:

- Akinyi's motivation behind starting her businesses.
- How her three businesses came to be; started with just \$200, 15 years ago.
- Akinyi's collaboration with over 2,000 traditional weavers across Africa.
- Trade barriers faced in importing traditional cotton fabrics from Burkina Faso to Kenya.
- Akinyi's "inclusive and fair" approach to business.
- Her pride in creating an international trademarked brand and products which can be traced "from farm to runway."
- The hunt for a business partner to support business expansion.
- Current customer locations (Africa, Asia, Europe and the US) and the dream to establish a retail presence outside Kenya.
- Word-of-mouth and social media as affordable and effective promotional tools.
- Fashion Agenda Africa and its role in teaching the youth a professional approach to fashion.
- Lesson learned: Be yourself.
- Akinyi's words of inspiration: "Never give up!"

Useful Resources

Twitter: @AkinyiOdongoKE, @FashionAgendaKE

Websites: <http://akinyiodongo.co.ke/>,

<http://www.mefainstitute.co.ke/>,

<http://www.mefainstitute.co.ke/fashion-agenda-africa/>

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