

Larry Madowo joins CNN as Nairobi-based correspondent



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Larry Madowo has left the BBC to take up a new position with CNN as the network's Nairobi-based correspondent. Madowo officially started on Monday, 17 May 2021.



Larry Madowo most recently served as the BBC's North America correspondent in Washington DC, covering major US news stories including the Covid-19 outbreak, the 2020 presidential election and the protests following the death of George Floyd and the trial of Derek Chauvin. He also was a fill-in anchor for the network's flagship BBC World News America show that airs globally and on PBS stations across the United States.

■ ***Congrats on your appointment. How do you feel about it?***

Thank you. I'm thrilled to be heading back home (to Nairobi) and starting a new assignment with CNN covering a patch that's close to my heart. Whether I'm working in Johannesburg, London or Washington, Nairobi has always been special to me. This is an amazing platform to showcase the full breadth of African life with a massive audience and I can't wait to get started.

■ ***How and when did this come about?***

We've discussed my role with the leadership at CNN International since last year and this was the perfect time. I've always been critical of some of the foreign media's coverage of Africa, so I felt challenged when the CNN opportunity came up. It's easy to criticise other journalists' African reporting from the comforts of America, but I chose to come back, so the audience can hold me accountable to the same standards I preached.

■ ***What excites you most about taking on this new role?***

I'm an African and covering this continent's history being written in real time is a huge privilege. There are so many important developments across the continent right now, and I'm lucky to have CNN committing resources and airtime to them. I've watched and admired incredible reporting from colleagues like Nima Elbagir and David McKenzie, and I'm

looking forward to complementing their work.

▀ ***You're returning to Africa after all these years. How are you feeling?***

It's lovely to be coming back full time. There are still too many countries I haven't been to that I want to report from. I'm also looking forward to reconnecting with lots of friends and colleagues as their cities reopen. It's also a little bitter sweet because I'm leaving behind kind and thoughtful people in North America. I guess I had to choose and the motherland won.

▀ ***How did you end up working in the broadcasting industry?***

I ended up working in broadcast by accident. I thought I would be a lawyer or a Catholic priest, but I was clearly not cut out for either. Then I imagined I would be a writer but instead, I got a traineeship position on TV at KTN Kenya when I was just 20. It started my love for television, travel and Twitter. Now I can't imagine doing anything else.



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▀ ***What do you love most about your career, the industry and what you do?***

After a few months at CNBC Africa, people would often say hello when I went to Sandton City mall and ask me questions about stocks and the markets. This job allows you to really develop a connection with people, many of whom you'll never meet. I also love how far it has taken me, to every corner of the world and introduced me to lots of people who are nothing like me. But most of all, journalism means that people trust you with their stories and hope that you do them justice.

▀ ***What are your most memorable story that you've covered?***

I just covered the entire trial of Derek Chauvin, the White policeman who was convicted for the murder of George Floyd. It was an important court case that was watched around the world, and it tested me personally and professionally. I was a Black man in America reporting on a case with deep racial implications and I had to be both objective and insightful. It is one of the most important stories I've ever been on in my whole career.

▀ ***What has been your biggest career highlight?***

I feel that everything I've done has been a highlight – getting started on TV at 20, a career with the BBC over three continents and working across multiple platforms. But 2020 was probably the 'newsiest' year of my career, and I was a part of it all from the coronavirus outbreak, to the summer of protests following the death of George Floyd and ending in the 2020 US presidential election. For a kid who grew up in a small village in western Kenya without a TV, I pinched myself a lot that I was here.

▀ ***What is your biggest motivation in life?***

I just want to make my people proud. Madowo is my grandfather's name, and I don't want to bring shame to the whole family. I've come too far to disgrace them now, so I have to keep going.

▀ ***What career advice would you give to anyone entering the broadcasting industry?***

Never stop learning, develop your own style, and enjoy the journey. The simplest, dumbest questions sometimes have the most powerful answers. Viewers, or listeners, can tell when you're having fun and when you're faking it. It may take a while to get that dream job but if you keep working at it and making progress, it pays off eventually.

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