

CNN marks 10 Years of profiling African Voices

By [Ellana Lee](#)

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Africa and CNN's reporting across the continent has been a longstanding and essential component to the success of the network since CNN International launched in 1985.



Ellana Lee is senior vice president, CNN International & head of CNN Vision.

As the global leader in news, alongside expertise from anchors and correspondents such as Robyn Curnow, David McKenzie, Eleni Giokos, Zain Asher and Farai Sevenzo, CNN is well placed to provide both a global and simultaneously local perspective when reporting on stories that originate in Africa.

This approach was recently recognised by the Royal Television Society, when CNN's coverage amongst the celebrations in the streets following Robert Mugabe's resignation in 2017 was awarded a prestigious Breaking News Journalism Award last month. Described as a "journalistic and technical triumph that caught the excitement of the moment", it was the latest accolade that reinforced our reputation for how we report breaking news in Africa.

But how does an international news brand go beyond the headlines and best reflect the cultural transformation taking place across the continent? As head of CNN Vision, the creative production arm of CNN International, it's my job to translate this proven understanding of Africa and deliver that to our global audience.

Last year, CNN Vision contributed more than 1300 hours of original programming on CNN International, with three

individual shows being dedicated to Africa alone. These programmes, *African Voices*, *Marketplace Africa* and *Inside Africa*, aim to spotlight the business, cultural movements and changemakers who are shaping the continent.

Now in 2019, CNN is celebrating 10 years of [African Voices](#) – a culture show which has sought to bring a diverse range of the biggest and brightest personalities from across the continent to the rest of the world. Every week, *African Voices* highlights three different figures from Africa, who lead the narrative to show ‘their Africa’ to our viewers.

Ten years’ worth of programming is a significant milestone for any programme and it also provides a chance to reflect on some of the highlights during that time. *African Voices* has traced numerous stories from the start of their careers to international recognition, such as the likes of Trevor Noah, Sanaa Hamri, and Lupita Nyong’o, and highlighted the talents of Chimamanda Adichie and Akon.

To make a show like *African Voices* successful for that length of time, you need the scale and the audience - and CNN has both.

By applying our journalistic principles to these long-form series, documentaries and specials, we are able to find these authentic stories on the ground and accurately portray the changing narrative around the continent.

In the decade since *African Voices* first aired, CNN has developed into a truly multiplatform media company in line with a younger, more tech-savvy Africa, who increasingly approach the world with a digital-first outlook. We can see from studies like Ipsos’ Affluent Survey Africa, that social media is the first point of call for news and many more are now watching TV on mobile devices.

CNN is already the most followed social news brand, but we also have dedicated platforms for our Africa content with around 1.5 million followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Another example of this is through the latest addition to our African portfolio - a series titled, [Africa Avant-Garde](#), with digitally-led coverage which highlights the continent’s rich and vibrant contemporary arts scene both on TV and online.

Nowadays the concept of commissioning a show to an African viewership alone is redundant and limiting. A story may originate in Africa, but may also have wide-ranging interest in Europe, Asia or the Americas. At CNN, it is our role to apply our expertise and reach from around the world, such as in-depth reporting on China’s role in infrastructure and investment on the continent.

Our job is to tell Africa’s story. Whether that’s in the form of breaking news or across CNN Vision’s programming output, CNN has consistently been at the forefront of African coverage and trends. As we celebrate 10 years of airing *African Voices* across [digital](#) and social during March, we will continue to use our global footprint to tell the stories of the people, technologies and businesses shaping Africa’s future in the years ahead.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elana Lee is a Senior Vice President of CNN International and head of CNN Vision. African Voices airs on CNN International on Wednesday 13th March at 10:30 GMT (12h30 SAST). CNN Africa content is available on cnn.com/Africa.

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