

Who Tells Africa's Story: Africa No Filter and the Power of Narrative Change

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The story of Africa doesn't just shape perceptions. It shapes capital, opportunity, and power. Yet too often, that story is defined by poverty, conflict, and crisis. The Mauritius-based Africa No Filter is working to change that by supporting storytellers, researchers, and cultural leaders to reshape how Africans see themselves and how the world sees Africa. Its premise is clear: shift the narrative, and trust, investment, and opportunity will follow.

Africa is home to 60 percent of the world's uncultivated arable land, more than 30 percent of known reserves of critical minerals essential to the energy transition, and a creative economy projected to reach \$200 billion by 2030.

Yet, across many boardrooms, grant committees, and investment forums where decisions about capital allocation are made, Africa is still more readily associated with instability, corruption, and poverty than innovation, growth, or cultural influence.

That disconnect between perception and reality has material consequences. It impacts how Africa is funded, how investment risk is priced, and whether the continent is approached as a risk to be mitigated or a partner to invest in. This is the gap that Mauritius-based Africa No Filter (ANF) works to close. Through advocacy and community building, ANF supports journalists, creatives, arts and culture organizations and media platforms in reshaping how Africans see themselves and how the world sees Africa.

NARRATIVES AS ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Africa No Filter was born from a persistent paradox. Despite growing investment in African markets, dominant global narratives suggested little progress. "No matter how much investment they put into the continent," says Executive Director Moky Makura, "the stories seemed to imply that nothing was changing." In 2020, Makura was brought in to lead the then newly founded Africa No Filter, built on the premise that narrative change is foundational to development.

Makura traces her understanding of the power of narratives to 1985, when Live Aid – the benefit concert organized in response to the Ethiopian famine – was watched by an estimated 1.5 billion people worldwide. "That's when I believe the 'saving Africa' narrative was truly born and embedded," she says. Even she, as a Nigerian watching from home, felt the pull of it. "But there was a moment when I realized: what we are telling the world is not the Africa that I grew up in." ANF was founded on the idea that narrative is not peripheral to development—it is foundational to it.

THE COST OF PERCEPTION

The impact of narrative goes beyond reputation—it affects financial outcomes.

A 2024 report by ANF and advisory firm Africa Practice estimates that biased media coverage contributes to an additional [\\$4.2 billion](#) annually in sovereign borrowing costs across African countries. Many already face interest rates between 5% and 10%, significantly higher than those available to wealthier nations. “How do we as a continent build globally competitive businesses when we’re paying two to six times more,” Makura asks.

A separate [2025 study](#) by ANF and the University of Bath, surveying 1,100+ participants in the UK and US, found perceptions of Africa were overwhelmingly linked to poverty and corruption. Many respondents also expressed hesitancy to purchase African-made goods, from medicines to technology.

But the costs are not only external.

“When young Africans are constantly told that where they come from is broken, it affects how they see their own futures,” Makura says.

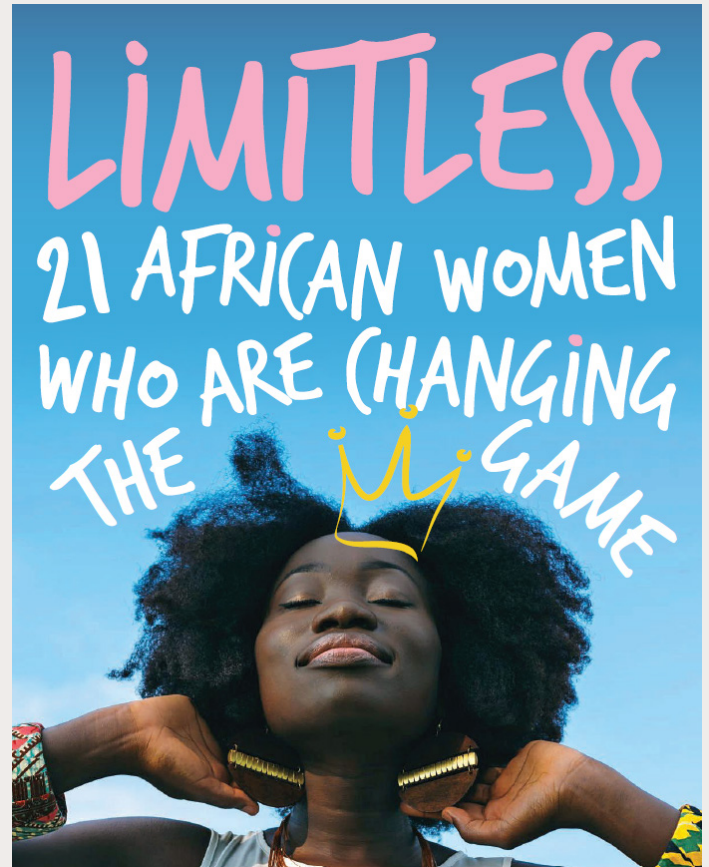
BACKING THE STORYTELLERS

ANF’s response has been to invest directly in a growing ecosystem of narrative changemakers across the continent. Grants typically range from \$3,000 to \$20,000 and are designed to support creators on their own terms. “It’s not ‘do this for us,’” Makura explains. “It’s: continue the work you are already doing.”

To date, ANF has committed more than \$7 million to Africa’s creative economy—an area that received less than 1% of the continent’s venture funding in 2024.

This support has enabled a wide range of projects: from documentaries reclaiming African literary histories to AI training datasets built on African voices and

languages. ANF also facilitates collaborations and global partnerships, including work with Disney to advance more authentic storytelling in mainstream media.



“Our priority is to change how we as Africans see ourselves, because a lot of these stereotypical narratives impact us, and we act on them. Once we do that and have a billion ambassadors, we won’t need to change how the world sees us. It will be done.”

MOKY MAKURA

Executive Director of Africa No Filter

“The creative economy, across film, music, fashion, arts, and culture, is a powerful driver of identity and influence. It shapes how Africa is seen and understood globally, yet it remains one of the least funded sectors on the continent.”

GRACE NJERI

Development Director of Africa No Filter

BEYOND METRICS

Narrative change is difficult to quantify, and ANF is honest about that challenge. “It’s upstream work,” says Grace Njeri, ANF Development Director. “Narratives shape belief, public imagination and social trust long before those shifts become measurable economically or politically.”

ANF tracks indicators such as media reach and shifts in how Africa is framed in coverage, as well as how leaders position the continent in global forums. But its broader goal is more fundamental: expanding what Africans believe is possible.

FUELING AFRICA’S NARRATIVE FUTURE

Changing a narrative rooted in centuries of misrepresentation takes time – and it takes capital patient enough to match that ambition. “We are focused on securing more multi-year, unrestricted funding that trusts African-led organizations to define, adapt and drive impact,” says Njeri.

One recent example of this is Opportunity Africa, a three-year pan-African platform for brands, institutions, storytellers, creators, and campaigns working to shape a more confident, opportunity-led Africa. It launched on Africa Day in May 2026 under the hashtag #NotWaiting. Backed by a \$1 million ANF investment and a council of communications, media and culture leaders, the campaign amplifies the people, ideas and work already moving Africa forward.

Considering the long-term nature of this mission and the essential role of philanthropic capital, [ANF set up an American Friends Fund at Myriad USA](#) to expand its U.S. donor base in supporting its work. For an organization whose mission is inseparable from the question of who controls the narrative and the resources behind it, the terms of that partnership are important.

“Myriad USA’s structure allows us to access US-based funding without compromising control,” says Njeri.

“We retain decision-making over our strategy, priorities, and grantmaking, ensuring the work remains firmly African-led.”

Because when Africans have the autonomy to tell their own stories, they reshape not just perception, but power, capital, and possibility.

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