

# GOOD MIGRATIONS

ARIK AIR PASSENGERS ON JOURNEYS OF A LIFETIME

GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING BENINOISE SINGER-SONGWRITER AND ACTIVIST, ANGLIQUE KIDJO HAS BEEN CALLED "AFRICA'S PREMIER DIVA" BY TIME MAGAZINE AND LISTED AMONG THE CONTINENT'S 50 MOST ICONIC PEOPLE BY THE BBC. BUT DESPITE INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTARDOM, IT'S THE JOURNEYS BACK HOME THAT ARE CLOSEST TO HER HEART.



© JED ROOT



**West Africa is a part of me and has a huge impact on my life.** I was born in Cotonou and I am half Nigerian (from Ilorin). But these days, between my role as a UNICEF ambassador and trying to fix the problem of child birth certificates in Benin, I don't get enough time at home. I spent two weeks in Benin recently and I only saw my mum three times.

**The ultimate reward is when I go to Africa and see people singing my songs.** People stop me and say I did something for their life or I spoke for them. When I was last in Benin, ladies were crying, hugging me and not letting me go. When people ask how I sing so confidently and with such strength, I say 'Do you not understand?' Not only do I have the whole continent supporting me, I have 9 million people in my country who support me. How many artists in the world have that? They pray for me, support my music, sing my songs and help

me keep my sanity, stay humble and continue to do what I do.

**It's important that Africans visit other countries within their region.** We don't know each other and that's where you start. For me to know about something going on in Nigeria or Cameroon, I have to go through the media in the Western world. Our news needs to go from one country to the other, not only politically but also in terms of showcasing the beauty of our countries. And if you don't know, it seems too far. We need to do that work first; have multiple platforms that allow us to make commercials about different countries, documentaries and short films about what is on offer. We don't know these things because colonisation decentralised everything. What is our culture? We usually have to come to Europe or the US to see it. If we showcase our continent, people will go from one country to the

other. I travel a lot in Africa and want to go to more places. What I also like to do is go to countries where the diaspora still has Africa running through its veins. Recently I went to Jamaica. I have been to Barbados, Brazil and Cuba. I go to all those places and see where Africa is living outside of its roots.

**Times are changing and Africa is the next the big thing.** It depends solely on us not to miss the opportunity. What I want to tell young people is that if you get a place in politics, do it well. Whatever the negotiation, make your country and your people part of it. How do we make every citizen of our countries able to have three meals a day, good access to education and develop our nations from within? To be able to succeed, we have to put people in a position of responsibility. If you start doing a deal and it is not working, bring it to TV and national attention, invite the country and corporations and say 'this is what is going on. Let's vote for it. Do you want it?' That way, you create a coalition with civil society and everyone can be accountable to one another. I believe in the future of our continent.