

LAGOSPHOTO FESTIVAL TRANSITIONS TO BIENNALE WITH ITS 2025 EDITION THEMED 'INCARCERATION'

*Curated by AAF's founder and director **Azu Nwagbogu**, LagosPhoto Festival transitions to a biennale with the theme 'Incarceration.' The 2025 edition will feature commissioned works from artists and diverse curations of incarceration perspectives, in collaboration with upcoming curators under Nwagbogu's guidance.*



July 19, 2024 (Benin and Nigeria) – **African Artists' Foundation (AAF)** is pleased to announce that the **LagosPhoto Festival**, the leading international arts festival of photography in Nigeria, will transition to a biennale format. Following the festival's successful geographical expansion to Benin Republic in 2023, this change is driven by a commitment to creating a more impactful and inclusive event. The biennale format will allow for extended planning, providing artists and creatives more time to prepare their participation. The next festival will be held in 2025.

2025 Theme: Incarceration

The theme for LagosPhoto Festival 2025 is 'Incarceration.' This edition will explore various dimensions of incarceration, from physical imprisonment to intellectual, psychological, and societal confinement. As described by Head Curator Azu Nwagbogu, "Incarceration can take many forms – physical, intellectual, and psychological. It can be imposed by external forces or self-inflicted through our own mental models and societal structures. Through this theme, we aim to challenge artists to uncover and liberate narratives that resonate with our times."

Workshops, Curatorial Trainings, Collaboratory activities in 2024

Despite the change to a biennale, LagosPhoto will continue to engage the artistic community through a series of workshops and curatorial training sessions during its usual period in October/November 2024. These workshops will focus on the theme of 'Incarceration,' providing artists with the tools and insights needed to create compelling work on this critical topic. The goal is to commission five artists to produce work specifically for LagosPhoto 2025. There will also be a series of collaboratory activities like exhibitions, performances, etc., presented during the period.

Open Call for Portfolios

In line with the workshops, LagosPhoto Festival is officially announcing an open call for portfolios. Artists working with lens-based media are invited to submit their portfolios for consideration. Selected artists will be invited to participate in a series of workshops and trainings focused on the theme of 'Incarceration' and technical photography skills. Following these workshops, artists will submit a cohesive plan for the work they intend to create for the festival. A final selection will then be made, with the chosen artists receiving support to develop their projects on the theme of 'Incarceration,' culminating in their participation in the 2025 festival. This open call aims to foster diverse perspectives and create powerful artefacts that capture the essence of incarceration in various forms.

[Open Call Image Here]

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

ABOUT AAF:

African Artists' Foundation (AAF), founded in 2007 in Lagos, Nigeria, is a decentralized, multivalent, metamorphic art space that embraces community values and experimental artistic principles. AAF supports boundary-breaking artistic ideas and promotes social justice issues, ecology, and community initiatives by empowering creative expression. The foundation fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of contemporary art, design, and culture through residencies, workshops, exhibitions, and educational programs.

ABOUT LAGOSPHOTO:

Launched in 2010, LagosPhoto is the first international arts festival of photography in Nigeria. The festival includes exhibitions, workshops, artist presentations, discussions, and large-scale outdoor prints displayed throughout Lagos. LagosPhoto aims to establish a community for contemporary photography, uniting local and international artists through images that encapsulate individual experiences and identities from across Africa. The festival educates about photography as it explores historical and contemporary issues, shares cultural practices, and promotes social programs.

LagosPhoto Festival 2025 - Incarceration Curatorial Outline

Text by Head Curator, Azu Nwagbogu

"There are many types of incarceration. There is being locked up in a prison cell, facing a 'sentence' that can range from a few weeks to a 'life' term with no prospect of release. There is the intellectual incarceration of being hubristically trapped in false mental models and lacking the humility to escape this self-imposed captivity by revisiting old assumptions and re-evaluating old conclusions. There is the incarceration of corruption. The prison bars, gilded cages, of eminent residents held captive and for whom abuse of the power, and self-interest go hand-in-hand. The authority vested in them by their high office are not made of metal — or even tangible — but are rather mental and psychological structures constituted of pride, lassitude and rendered in symptoms akin to acrophobia. There is the incarceration of being dehumanized by physical, mental or psychological conditions. Physical: being forced to live, under forms of segregation with water, power, and all other basic amenities controlled — and withheld at whim — by an occupying power. There is also the incarceration with architecture, the manner of building to keep others out and keep some caged in. Mental and psychological: having one's freedom of thought or expression curtailed. This may be the artistic or literary freedom of a writer or visual artist — the oppression we usually have in mind when we consider the numen "censorship". Or it may be the prison of skin tone that others try to impose or which one imposes as delimiting a wholesome existence. There is the incarceration of the narratives that we tell ourselves about ourselves that are not necessarily true. Perhaps the more shocking incarceration of the ordinary citizen to speak freely about his or her experiences without fear of being persecuted or incarcerated by the authorities. There is the incarceration by national borders shaped and incentivised by European rapacity. A gathering organised by Otto von Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany 140 years ago and to this day, that ungodly gathering in Berlin, confounds the continent of Africa. With all professed truths, there is always an underlying paradox. For example, the world's great democracy, the land of the brave and free has by far the most incarnated peoples on the planet. The 2.2 million currently incarcerated prisoners accounting for a quarter of the world's total number of prisoners. To be free is to be willing to suffer for the truth. All great art is a questing for this truth and nothing can be more insipid than the performativity of virtue over embracing virtue itself. Materiality plays a vital role in closing the liminal space between an artist's vision and viewers' perceptions. The main imprisonment danger in any creative endeavour is to begin. The second aspect of incarceration is that both the artistic 'giver' and the audience, viewer or other 'receiver' are trapped — held captive — in their own reference systems, limited by bars established by a sort of essentialist predetermination. However the lens captures and liberates time. Photographers, film and image makers understand the

urgency of creating and capturing artefacts of our time. For the 15th edition of the annual LagosPhoto Festival, we challenge artists to liberate narratives that are powerful artefacts of our time."