



Tiguidanke Camara

MINING ENTREPRENEUR

If ever you had any doubts about pursuing a career in a traditionally perceived male environment as a woman, look no further than Tiguidanke Camara for inspiration. A mining entrepreneur, and former model from Guinea, Tigui is the only female mine owner in her country. A go-getter of note, Tigui has featured in music videos and starred in movies alongside A-listers in Hollywood. What makes her story interesting is her ability to balance motherhood and a demanding business crediting this to a winning formula constituting will power, passion and hard work. Tigui shares her empowering journey to successful entrepreneurship with AfroElle's

TATENDA KANENGONI.

Can you please share your background with us.

My name is Tiguidanke Camara, I am a former model turned mining entrepreneur. I am the Chairman and Founder of Tigui Mining Group and Camara Diamond & Gold Mining Trading Network. Since creating my group in 2009, we have achieved expansion in several West African countries.

I am also one of the few and youngest women executives in the African mining industry. As the sole woman mine owner in Guinea, the proudest job I have is being a mom to my twins Hawa and Mohamed Mounir Sakho.

Mining can be seen as a predominantly male industry, How did you breakthrough into the industry?

Over the years, I have seen a positive trend in women entering the industry. However, I think we have a lot more to do as an industry to ensure women's full participation; that is one of my focuses. As far as my journey, as a model, I interacted a lot with people in the fashion and jewelry world.

Many of my friends were also jewelers. I noticed that all of them brought their gems from Africa or had business ventures in the mining industry operating in Africa and specifically in my native country Guinea.

This made me pay closer attention to the industry. Additionally, I knew the power

the industry has in shaping economies so I decided to get involved. Corporate responsibility is a key part of my ventures.

Through my work, we are able to provide economic opportunities to people living in the communities within which we operate. This is my way of giving back.

What can you share with us about the business of mining?

The business of mining is a challenging one. It demands a lot of capital, great management and technology in order to succeed. One of the biggest challenges is raising funds especially in the early stages and to find a proven reserve. It takes a lot of energy and resources but the reward is worth it.

Please tell us about your modeling days.

My modeling days were one of the best moments of my life. Fashion is something I have always been passionate about so I was blessed to live one of my dreams and to work with some of the best designers, artists and models worldwide.

The lessons I learnt while modeling contributed to the person I am today. I learnt to be strong, confident and to not be afraid of rejection. I also learnt to put myself out there and to not be embarrassed. Whether I was walking the runway at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion week, doing a video or a magazine shoot, I was proud to represent my country and continent. I worked hard to always present a positive image of Africa.



You have acted with and featured in movies with iconic stars such as Nicholas Cage, how was that experience for you?

The experience was great! He is someone I admire and respect. Playing my role in the movie "Bringing out the dead" was definitely emotional because the character was complex. It was also difficult because I come from a conservative Muslim family, so I had to think about it a lot. I decided to do play the role because I realized you have to start somewhere. Even great actresses like Halle Berry play roles that push the envelope. In short, it was great to act in the movie, it's a memory I cherish.

What lessons have you learnt from being in the company of accomplished stars during the days you pursued the entertainment industry?

I learnt that there is no limit. Always dream big. You also have to add hard work and focus to your dream if you want to see it happen. The celebrities you see are just like you and me. They struggled but believed in their dream and never gave up. Keep working hard and believe. Nothing is impossible.

Please tell us about your high-end clothing line?

Foudis is a high-end handmade fashion line with a focus on African textile. It is named after my mother. I work in collaboration with over 300 artisans throughout Africa to create unique pieces that convey the elegance, style and culture of modern Africa. We create products such as clothes, shoes, accessories and home goods exclusively for

a select clientele to satisfy their needs.

How do you balance running multiple businesses and your personal life, especially motherhood?

It is definitely challenging. It's hard to sometimes miss key milestones in my children's lives because of travel and other obligations. However, it has also made us closer because we appreciate each other more. I am lucky to see my kids grow into strong and independent people. I am also lucky to have an amazing family.

They support me and help me with my kids. We have all learnt to adapt and shift roles as necessary. I am fortunate to be able to live my dream, as a woman, I don't think I have to choose between the two. Women always have to reconcile working or being at home. It's important to have supportive people who can support you in whatever decision you make.

In your opinion, what is the key to successful entrepreneurship?



The key to success in my opinion is to have a vision. You need a clear path you want to follow and do what it takes to reach your goal. You have to persevere and never give up no matter the obstacles life throws your way. It's also important to be passionate about what you are doing so it doesn't feel like work.

Finally, professionalism is paramount. Always act professionally, be respectful to people you meet and end things on a good note. You never know if that person is one day going to hold one of the keys to your success. []

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