

THE PRE-TRAVEL MARRIAGE COVENANT GUIDE

The 5 Conversations Every African Couple Must Have Before They Board That Plane — And How to Have Them Properly



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AfricanHomeFront

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A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Why These Conversations Do Not Happen

Most African couples who move abroad do everything right before departure. They get the right visas. They save the right amount. They research the right city, the right neighbourhood, the right schools for the children. They say their goodbyes properly, they honour their families properly, they pray with their pastors and board that plane with genuine faith and genuine love for each other.

And then - in the first year, or the second year, or the third - something begins to break.

Not because they were the wrong couple. Not because the move was the wrong decision. But because they arrived in a new country carrying a marriage built entirely on assumptions that nobody had ever examined, let alone discussed.

Research finding:

Studies on acculturation discrepancy consistently confirm: when partners adopt new norms at different speeds, they develop mismatched expectations about family roles, parenting, and daily decisions. This mismatch erodes intimacy and communication, increasing marital stress (ResearchGate, 2025). Couples who had explicitly discussed these expectations before or during migration reported significantly lower levels of conflict than those who had not.

This guide gives you the conversations that make the invisible visible - before departure, when the information is genuinely useful, rather than after arrival, when the collision of unexamined

assumptions has already begun doing damage.

For Couples Already Abroad

It is not too late. These conversations can be had now. They are harder now - because you are having them from inside the strain rather than from the excitement of pre-departure. But they are not less valuable. In some ways they are more valuable - because you have the lived evidence of what happens when they go unaddressed.

The Ground Rules For Every Conversation

Before you begin Conversation 1, agree on these ground rules. Say them out loud. Both of you.

Ground Rules - Agree To These Before Starting:

Ground Rule 1: The goal is understanding, not winning. We are not here to persuade our partner that our position is correct. We are here to genuinely understand what they think, feel, and need.

Ground Rule 2: What is said here is not ammunition. Nothing said in these conversations can be used in a future argument.

Ground Rule 3: Write before you speak. Both partners write their honest answers before sharing them verbally.

Ground Rule 4: One conversation per sitting. Do not attempt all five in a single evening.

Ground Rule 5: Stay in the conversation. If it becomes uncomfortable - take a brief break. Come back. The hardest conversations are usually the most necessary ones.



CONVERSATION 1

Money: Who Controls What When Both Of You Are Earning

Why This Conversation Matters

Of all five conversations, this is the one that most directly addresses the structural fracture point in African diaspora marriages. In most African marriages, the financial arrangement is not discussed - it is assumed. He earns, he manages, she manages within what she is given. In a Western country, this arrangement becomes a source of serious conflict at the moment his wife receives her first independent salary.

Research finding:

A qualitative study on perceived causes of marital dissatisfaction among Nigerian immigrants in North America (PMC, 2025) identified financial control and the shifting of financial decision-making as one of the most consistently reported sources of marital conflict in the diaspora. Having an explicit shared framework before arrival prevents these conflicts from becoming entrenched patterns.

The Opening Question

"When we are both earning in the new country - how do you think our money should work? Not how it works now. If we were designing it from scratch together, what would feel right to you?"

Ask this question. Then be quiet. Let your partner answer fully before you respond.

Deeper Prompts

Use these to go beneath the surface answer:

- What do you feel entitled to spend money on - from your own earnings - without needing to discuss it with me first?
- What financial decisions do you think we should always make together?
- Is there anything about how we currently manage money that feels unfair to you?
- What does financial security mean to you in this country?
- How much do you think we should send home, and how should that decision be made?
- If our incomes became significantly different - in either direction - how should that change how we manage money?

Response Space

Write your honest answer before sharing. Do not look at your partner's answers until you have finished writing your own.

HUSBAND:

How I genuinely think our money should work when we are both earning:

The financial arrangement that would feel genuinely respectful of my contribution:

What I am most worried about regarding money in the new country:

WIFE:

How I genuinely think our money should work when we are both earning:

The financial arrangement that would feel genuinely respectful of my contribution:

What I am most worried about regarding money in the new country:

The Agreement

After the conversation, record what you have agreed:

Our financial management framework:

Our contribution approach (equal amounts / equal percentage / other):

What each person has personal financial autonomy over:

Our agreed approach to remittances home:

We will review this arrangement after:

Husband: _____ Wife: _____ Date: _____



CONVERSATION 2

Roles: Who Does What When Both Of You Are Working Full-Time

Why This Conversation Matters

When one person works and one person manages the home, the division of domestic labour is relatively straightforward. When both people work full-time - often in demanding jobs, often on different shifts - the old division of labour becomes functionally impossible and emotionally unsustainable. The resentment that builds when a woman works a twelve-hour nursing shift and comes home to a husband who expects dinner on the table is one of the most reliably destructive forces in African diaspora marriages.

The Opening Question

"We are both working full-time here. Honestly - how do you think the home responsibilities should be divided between us? What feels fair to you?"

Ask this question. Then be quiet. Let your partner answer fully before you respond.

Deeper Prompts

Use these to go beneath the surface answer:

- What are the domestic tasks that feel most burdensome to you right now?

-
- What would feel like genuine support from me on the days when you are exhausted?
 - Are there things I am currently not doing at home that you wish I would take ownership of?
 - How should we handle it when one of us is working more hours than the other in a given week?
 - What do the children need from both of us that they are not currently getting?

Response Space

Write your honest answer before sharing. Do not look at your partner's answers until you have finished writing your own.

HUSBAND:

What I think a fair division of home responsibilities looks like when we are both working full-time:

The domestic tasks I am genuinely willing to take primary ownership of:

What I need from my wife/husband on my hardest days at home:

WIFE:

What I think a fair division of home responsibilities looks like when we are both working full-time:

The domestic tasks I am genuinely willing to take primary ownership of:

What I need from my husband/wife on my hardest days at home:

The Agreement

After the conversation, record what you have agreed:

Tasks the husband takes primary ownership of:

Tasks the wife takes primary ownership of:

Tasks we share or rotate:

How we will handle exhaustion and difficult weeks:

We will review this arrangement after:

Husband: _____ Wife: _____ Date:



CONVERSATION 3

Identity: Who We Each Might Become - And The Promise To Change Together

Why This Conversation Matters

This is the conversation that almost never happens before departure - and it is the one whose absence causes the most damage. When two people move to a new country, they do not just change their address. They change. The question is not whether both partners will change in the diaspora. They will. The question is whether they will change together - in dialogue, with honesty, with mutual commitment to remain genuinely known to each other through the process - or whether they will each change separately, in private, until one day they look across the dinner table and realise they are living with a person they no longer fully know.

Research finding:

Research consistently shows that acculturation discrepancy - when partners adapt to a new cultural environment at significantly different rates, without shared dialogue about that process - is one of the strongest predictors of marital conflict in diaspora couples (International Perspectives in Psychology). Couples who navigated cultural adaptation as a shared, explicitly discussed process showed significantly better marital outcomes.

The Opening Question

"I want to ask you something honest. When you imagine who you will become in this new country - what does that person look like? And is there anything about becoming that person you are excited about, or anything you are afraid of?"

Ask this question. Then be quiet. Let your partner answer fully before you respond.

Deeper Prompts

Use these to go beneath the surface answer:

- Is there a version of yourself that this move might create that you have not been able to be here at home?
- What parts of who you are right now do you most want to hold onto in the new country?
- Is there anything about yourself that you expect to change abroad - and are you worried about how I will respond?
- How do you think your expectations of our marriage might change when we are both financially independent?
- Is there something you need from our marriage now that you did not need before we left?

Response Space

Write your honest answer before sharing. Do not look at your partner's answers until you have finished writing your own.

HUSBAND:

The version of myself I think this move might produce - honestly:

The parts of who I am that I most want to hold onto:

What I am most afraid might change in my partner after we relocate:

What I need from my wife/husband in order to feel secure enough to change and grow abroad without losing us:

WIFE:

The version of myself I think this move might produce - honestly:

The parts of who I am that I most want to hold onto:

What I am most afraid might change in my partner after we relocate:

What I need from my husband/wife in order to feel secure enough to change and grow abroad without losing us:

The Agreement

After the conversation, record what you have agreed:

Something I commit to sharing as I change and grow here (husband):

Something I commit to sharing as I change and grow here (wife):

Something I commit to remaining regardless of how much else changes (husband):

Something I commit to remaining regardless of how much else changes (wife):

How we will check in on each other's growth and keep our knowledge of each other current:

Husband: _____ Wife: _____ Date: _____



CONVERSATION 4

Community: Building A Shared Life Here - Not Just A Shared Address

Why This Conversation Matters

One of the least discussed dimensions of the diaspora transition is what happens to both partners' sense of belonging when they leave the community that has always held them. At home, both partners are embedded in a social fabric that sustains them without requiring deliberate effort. Extended family. Church. Neighbourhood. People who knew them before they became who they are. In the diaspora, that fabric is gone. Most couples navigate the isolation separately - each building their own social world in response to their own loneliness. And gradually, without either partner choosing it, they are living in the same home but inhabiting entirely different social worlds.

The Opening Question

"When you think about the life we are going to build in the new country - not just the career, not just the house, not just the financial plan - but the actual life, the community, the people around us - what do you hope that looks like? What kind of community do you need in order to feel genuinely at home?"

Ask this question. Then be quiet. Let your partner answer fully before you respond.

Deeper Prompts

Use these to go beneath the surface answer:

- What do you miss most, already, about the community we have here at home?
- Is there a church, cultural organisation, or African community group you want us to find and invest in together?
- Is there a risk that we each build separate social worlds and gradually lose the sense of having a shared life?
- How do we support each other's individual friendships without feeling like we are growing apart?
- What community do our children need in the new country? How do we give them cultural grounding?

Response Space

Write your honest answer before sharing. Do not look at your partner's answers until you have finished writing your own.

HUSBAND:

The kind of community I need in order to feel genuinely at home in the new country:

What I am most afraid of losing when we leave the community we have here:

The shared community I most want us to build together in the new country:

WIFE:

The kind of community I need in order to feel genuinely at home in the new country:

What I am most afraid of losing when we leave the community we have here:

The shared community I most want us to build together in the new country:

The Agreement

After the conversation, record what you have agreed:

One shared community we will invest in together from the beginning:

How we will support each other's individual friendships without growing apart:

How we will raise our children with African cultural grounding while living abroad:

Our first concrete step toward shared community within three months of arrival:

Husband: _____ Wife: _____ Date: _____



CONVERSATION 5

The One Question Nobody Asks: What Happens If One of Us Changes Significantly?

Why This Conversation Matters

This is the question underneath all the other questions. Every couple who moves abroad knows, at some level, that they will change. But almost no couple explicitly discusses what they have committed to doing when that change creates distance between them. Without that commitment, both partners are left navigating the change in isolation - each privately wondering whether the marriage can contain who they are becoming, neither one willing to raise the question directly because raising it feels too frightening. This conversation names the question directly. And naming it, with both partners present, is the act that makes it possible to answer it together rather than alone.

The Opening Question

"Here is a question I want us to answer together before we leave. We both know that we are going to change in the new country. My question is: what have we committed to doing with each other when that change begins to create distance between us? What is our actual agreement - not just that we love each other, but specifically what we commit to doing when the distance comes?"

Ask this question. Then be quiet. Let your partner answer fully before you respond.

Deeper Prompts

Use these to go beneath the surface answer:

- If you became someone I no longer fully recognised - not because something went wrong but because you genuinely grew - what would you want me to do?
- Is there a version of who you might become here that you are afraid would not fit in our marriage?
- What is the thing you are most afraid of losing about yourself if you fully adapt to life here?
- What is the thing about me that you most need to remain unchanged?
- If our marriage started to feel too small for who we were both becoming - what is our commitment about how we handle that?
- What does growing together rather than apart actually look like in practice - day by day?

Response Space

Write your honest answer before sharing. Do not look at your partner's answers until you have finished writing your own.

HUSBAND:

The change in my wife that I am most honestly afraid of:

The change in myself that I am most honestly afraid of:

The specific commitment I am making - when distance begins to grow between us, I will:

What I need to hear from my wife in order to feel genuinely secure:

WIFE:

The change in my husband that I am most honestly afraid of:

The change in myself that I am most honestly afraid of:

The specific commitment I am making - when distance begins to grow between us, I will:

What I need to hear from my husband in order to feel genuinely secure:

The Agreement

After the conversation, record what you have agreed:

When I notice distance growing between us, the specific thing I commit to doing immediately (husband):

When I notice distance growing between us, the specific thing I commit to doing immediately (wife):

When my partner needs me to understand a change they are going through, I commit to responding with (husband):

When my partner needs me to understand a change they are going through, I commit to responding with (wife):

If we find ourselves in serious difficulty, we commit to:

Husband: _____ Wife: _____ Date: _____

THE DIASPORA MARRIAGE COVENANT DOCUMENT

A Written Record of What You Have Committed To Each Other

Complete this document together after you have finished all five conversations.

What This Document Is:

This is not a legal document. It is a relational one - a written record of the explicit agreements and commitments you have made to each other as you prepare to navigate the diaspora together.

Keep it somewhere both of you can access it. Return to it when things get hard. Revise it after your first year abroad - your answers will be different, your understanding will be deeper.

Part 1 - Who We Are And Why We Are Going

Our names:

Husband: _____ Wife: _____

The country we are moving to: _____

Date of this covenant: _____

Why we are making this move - in our own words, what we came here to build:

What we are NOT willing to sacrifice in the process of building it:

Part 2 - Our Financial Agreement

Our financial management framework: _____

Our contribution approach (equal amounts / equal percentage / other): _____

Personal financial autonomy each person has: _____

Our remittance approach: _____

The threshold above which we discuss before spending: _____

How we will handle significant income differences: _____

Review date for this agreement: _____

Part 3 - Our Home Responsibilities Agreement

Tasks the husband takes primary ownership of:

Tasks the wife takes primary ownership of:

Shared or rotated tasks:

How we handle exhaustion and hard weeks: _____

Review date for this agreement: _____

Part 4 - Our Identity Commitment

Something I commit to sharing as I change and grow:

Husband: _____

Wife: _____

Something I commit to remaining regardless of how much else changes:

Husband: _____

Wife: _____

How we will keep each other genuinely known as we both change:

Part 5 - Our Community Commitment

The shared community we are committing to build together: _____

How we will maintain our African identity and faith while living abroad:

How we will raise our children with cultural grounding in a Western country:

Our first step toward shared community within three months of arrival:

Part 6 - Our Commitment To Navigating Change Together

When either of us notices distance growing between us, the specific thing we commit to doing immediately:

When either of us needs the other to understand a change we are going through:

If we find ourselves in serious difficulty in the new country - if the marriage is genuinely struggling - we commit to:

Part 7 - The Promise We Are Making To Each Other

Written by each partner individually - in their own words, from their own heart. Not a formula. Your own words.

HUSBAND:

The promise I am making to you as we board this plane together:

WIFE:

The promise I am making to you as we board this plane together:

The Signatures

We have had all five conversations. We have written this covenant honestly. We are committing to what is written here - not perfectly, because perfection is not what marriage requires, but genuinely, because genuineness is what sustains it.

We are choosing each other. Again. With full knowledge of the difficulty ahead and genuine faith in our capacity to face it together.

Husband: _____ Date: _____

Wife: _____ Date: _____

When To Return To This Covenant

- After your first three months abroad: review Part 3 - Home Responsibilities. The initial arrangement almost always needs adjustment.
- After your first year abroad: work through all five conversations again. Your answers will be different.
- When either partner says "something is not working": come back to this document.
- On your wedding anniversary each year: read Part 7 - the promises you made to each other - out loud. Then add to it.
- If the marriage is in serious difficulty: come back to this document. Not to use it as evidence in an argument - but as a reminder of who you were when you wrote it.



CLOSING

A Word As You Board That Plane

You have just done something that the overwhelming majority of African couples who move abroad have never done.

You have had the conversations.

You have sat with each other - possibly uncomfortably, possibly with things being said that were difficult to hear and difficult to say - and you have done the honest, specific, deeply loving work of making the invisible visible before it could do invisible damage.

You are not going to the new country with perfect preparation. Nobody has perfect preparation.

But you are going with a shared map. With explicit agreements. With genuine knowledge of what the other person needs, fears, and is committed to. With a written record of the promises you have made to each other - promises that were made with full consciousness, not assumed without examination.

That is an extraordinary thing to carry onto a plane together.

It is not a guarantee. Life does not offer guarantees.

It is a foundation. And on a good foundation, two people who love each other and are willing to do the work can build almost anything.

Build something extraordinary.

With deep respect and genuine hope for what you are about to create together,

Chidi Okonkwo

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AfricanHomeFront - Protecting What Matters Most

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Important Disclaimers

Educational Purpose

This guide is written for educational and informational purposes only. It does not constitute professional psychological, legal, immigration, or therapeutic advice.

Results

Results described represent individual experiences. Your results will depend on your specific circumstances, the nature of your relationship, your consistency of effort, and factors unique to your situation.

Professional Support

If your conversations surface difficulties beyond the scope of self-guided work, please seek qualified professional support from a counsellor with experience working with African and Black diaspora couples.

Consensual Use

These conversations are designed to support healthy, consensual dialogue between willing partners. If your relationship involves any form of coercion, control, or harm, please seek professional support.

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Thank You.

You have done something most people never do - you started.

From the bottom of my heart - thank you for trusting me with something this important. Your marriage. Your family. Your home.

Most men carry the weight of a struggling diaspora marriage entirely alone. The fact that you picked up this guide - that you were willing to look honestly at yourself and at what is happening between you and your wife - tells me everything I need to know about the kind of man you are.

That man deserves a marriage that thrives. I genuinely believe you are going to build one.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

a small thing? I

Your story might
on his marriage

Send your feedback directly to:

eccentricconcept2@gmail.com

Include your name, city, and what shifted for you. Even two sentences matter more than you know.

MORE FROM AFRICANHOMEFONT

Your Wife Is Earning. Your Marriage Is Dying. Here Is What To Do.

The complete diaspora marriage guide - 9 chapters, 7 tools, the full 5-Step Protocol and 30-Day Reset Protocol.

The African Man's Ego Audit Workbook

15 honest questions with five 7-day domain-specific awareness plans. The deeper companion to Chapter 3 of the main guide.

The Pre-Travel Marriage Covenant Guide

Five structured conversation frameworks and the complete Diaspora Marriage Covenant Document for couples preparing to relocate.

All products available at:

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Join the AfricanHomeFront community on Facebook:

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Go and build the marriage your family deserves.

With respect and solidarity,

Chidi Okonkwo

B.Sc (Hons) Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution

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