

## From Africa to 1,500 Kroger Stores: My American Journey

**Manny Addo**

River Grove Books

(156pp)

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*A motivational immigrant entrepreneur's memoir, From Africa to 1,500 Kroger Stores models knowledgeable marketing strategies and encourages businesspeople to be forces for good in the world.*

CEO and founder of Natural Shea Care Manny Addo's inspirational memoir *From Africa to 1,500 Kroger Stores* concerns his entrepreneurial origins, commercial success, and social impact.

Addo was born and raised in Ghana, where personal tragedy and poverty spurred his dreams to become an international businessman. After the death of his mother and a frustrating visa process, Addo moved to Cincinnati to earn his MBA at Xavier University. After graduation, he gained experience with Fortune 500 companies before setting out on his own entrepreneurial adventure: to sell shea butter to an American market. He found success with retailers such as Kroger, Walmart, and Amazon. Later, he engaged in charity work in the United States and Africa.

While the book begins with stories about Addo's early life and education, its autobiographical elements are bypassed and pushed aside as the book continues. Indeed, the story of Addo's bold business pitch to former Cintas CEO Scott Farmer is breezed over in a few short paragraphs, and his wife and children are mentioned only in brief. A marketing strategy for increasing sales in Kroger stores consumes considerable space, with the book both arguing the importance of an effective marketing strategy and sharing Addo's particular marketing strategies as an illustration.

The book is flush with cross-cultural insights, if these are somewhat limited to business strategy contexts. Entrepreneurs at the margins are cautioned, "You have to overpromise, then overwork, and then finally you over-deliver." The text draws parallels between Addo's experiences as an immigrant and his experiences as an entrepreneur and seeks to connect cultural differences to marketing strategies: Addo distinguished his target audience (Black Americans) from those uninterested in his product (Africans) and those occupying in-between spaces, including people who immigrated to the US in childhood and second-generation Americans. Elsewhere, anecdotes regarding accent-based miscommunications lead into a discussion of the importance of clarity during business meetings.

Its tone earnest, the book is clear when it comes to sharing tips and strategies. It models transitioning a product from local retailers to bigger markets and emphasizes the importance of "scrappy" beginnings and smart business tactics. Ending on a note of inspiration, it asks aspiring entrepreneurs "What is your shea butter?", encouraging them to consider how their ideas will allow them to be a positive force in the world.

Encouraging fellow entrepreneurs to pursue their dreams and leading by example, *From Africa to 1,500 Kroger Stores* is an inspirational businessman's memoir.

HANNAH PEARSON (August 6, 2024)

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