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THE ROAD WE CAME

A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

A CASE STUDY OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The dreams in your heart may be bigger than the environment you find yourself (Joel Osteen). The road we came is like a conversation with an old friend of mine and that old friend is me. It is the story of my life, what has been, what is, and what will be. Every life has a story to tell. This paper highlights the major points about my life, and its literary value. The place I was born, the circumstances under which I was born. My family heritage, my great grandfather, a great warrior and the founder of my village. It touches the early childhood struggles to overcome imposing hardships, obstacles and develop into a person. My parents, things I remember about them. My father's upright faith in his religion. Standing out against all odds before the entire village to abolish the Mmaji fetish tradition. And how this personal experience relates to the struggle by my tribe, nation, continent, and the entire human race to overcome the obstacles that have been encountered on their journey into existence right from the beginning.

The purpose of this project is to use the knowledge of experiential learning to tell and narrate the tale of my life. Exploring into my life's purposes, how I set out to achieve them. I am compelled by the lack of the basic amenities/public services developed countries take for granted such as; clean water, electricity, shelter, food, clothing, good road networks, school, library, healthcare/hospital in my village when I was born. The difficulties passed through to have and enjoy these motivated me to strive to make the world a better place for me and others to live. Also my fears, not to be considered as a failure, like Oleka my good for nothing uncle. Sharing my experiences and lessons learned especially to my daughter Annabel, and her siblings, descendants and others who may not have been born under the same circumstances nor had a happy or easy childhood. And to leave the enriching experiences as a gift and legacy to them. And my mission is according to Albert Einstein, "stay the course, light a star, change the world wherever you are".

"It is one thing to show a man that he is in error and another thing to put him in possession of the truth" (John Locke). This project imposes some research questions. Why do some individuals, villages, communities, nations, and continents have more, while others have none or less? Why nature's resources are not evenly distributed? How do some people become successful and wealthier than others? Even countries, why are some nations happier and more contented than others? And why should one leave his home land to another? My approach to accomplish my objectives in this project is based on three procedures.

1. Retrospective experiences; In Nigeria, the early years ,reviewing life times to establish a contact with my childhood, the events, education, people who influenced me, struggles, failures and successes in life that have taken me to where I am now.
2. Current experiences; In Europe, the experiences living abroad, major impacts.
3. Prospective experience; A balance between the past, present and future aspirations

In my own opinion it is important to note that the road to success, prosperity and happiness is not a closed door to anyone neither is it an exclusivity of some privileged few. And one is only a victim of his birth place if he chooses to be.

DEDICATION: This work is dedicated to my precious wife and daughter, Anthonia Nkiru and Annabel Ucheoma Uchendu in appreciation of their undying love, encouragement, patience and support, especially the times when my studies and assignments ran deep into late nights, denying them the warmth and comfort of my presence at home. To my dear parents, late Elder Abraham Onuoha Nwosu and Agnes Onuoha, for their devotion to the Lord. Their prayers and love for me, which have inspired me to explore my potentials. They thought me that hard work pays, and that honesty is virtue. My dear parents, your labor was not in vain. And to my elder sister, Sarah Chi Ajiere who has poured spiritual wisdom and exemplary life into me, I thank her for making useful inputs and impacts to my life. Also to the rest of my brothers and sisters, deacon Josiah Onuoha, Fineman Onuoha, Oluchi and Glory Onuoha who have always stood by me through thick and thin. To my friend Anita, for the transparent and true friendship we have shared. Finally to all the outstanding journalists and media specialists especially in Nigeria. You are my inspiration, so keep the light shining.

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INTRODUCTION: The destination prompts the journey. The road we came is the story of my life. The past, present and future starting with a childhood in my native village, and growing up in Nigeria 45 years ago and broadened to experiences living abroad. The world is a veritable play ground for us to fulfill the role assigned to us by divine providence. We may not all have the same smooth and level ground or rocky terraces allocated to us to accomplish our life roles within the time and space we occupy. But whatever be our lot we must till our ground to make it yield.

“Those who are blessed with the soaring swiftness of an eagle and has flown before let them fly, I will journey slowly and I too will arrive”. (Unknown) Everybody’s life has a purpose, and the life’s purpose when explored reveals life lessons learned while striving to achieve that purpose. This book is a journey into my life. The purpose of any meaningful education is to use the knowledge acquired to benefit the individual, community, nation and the world at large. Therefore I will employ this as a dividend derived from the Atlantic International University (AIU) experiential learning to make tourism back to the road traversed in childhood, a leap to the season of my youth and an adventure into the future. The experiences and lessons learned I will share with my old friend and that is I, others, children, descendants and the world in general as a legacy to them when I am gone. To achieve that, I will follow these procedures.

Retrospective experiences in Nigeria. Reviewing my life times to establish contact with the early days, my birth, all the events, hardships, struggles, happy and troubled moments, failures and successes in life that has taken me to where I am now and that I would like to be in future. Things I remember about my parents. My education, from primary, college and university. The institutions attended the major stages that impacted me. The people that have influenced or inspired my life. The best and frightening things that happened in my childhood. Current experiences in Europe. Leaving homeland, why did I leave home? Living in Europe, the experiences and major impacts. Prospective; A balance between the past, present and future aspirations.

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THE EARLY DAYS: The events and circumstances surrounding this story on the part one of this paper happened in Nigeria where I was born and grew up from adolescence, to youthful and adult age. These were after Nigeria’s emergence as an independent nation, the plunge into a devastating genocide and civil war. A war that left no Ibo family without a human loss. The hard conditions of living of the Igbo’s and easterners faced after the war. This covers my school days, work and business engagements until my departure from the shores of Nigeria.

MY BIRTH: “No matter how far a stream flows it never forgets its source”. I was born about 45 years ago in Umuogele village of Igbo descent in the Eastern region of Nigeria during the onset of Nigeria’s hostility on my kinsmen the Igbo’s, which climaxed into the Nigerian Biafra war. It was a time when men’s heart failed them. Especially the Igbo’s as they were been hunted, butchered, maimed, slaughtered like sheep in all parts of Nigeria. Many of their pregnant women were pierced with daggers and machetes and there fetus disemboweled. It was a time of genocide never known to any tribe in the history of Africa before. It was under such a gruesome circumstance that I came into the world. My delivery was at the home of Mgborogwu (Root) an old woman who served as a native birth attendant as there were no clinic and hospitals to take care of child delivery.” Under such circumstance, no accurate birth record and birth date were kept. Parents reckon on significant events that happened to remember when a child was born.

Growing up in my native home at that time was not easy. The basic amenities of living were not there. Indoor plumbing, electricity, hospital services and schools were non-existent in the village. Our source of water was the rain water and ponds. Each compound dug a big hole that could help retain water for domestic use after rainfall. The pond would retain this deluge of ground water for a few days and dry up later. We trekked long distances carrying clay and calabash pots to streams located far away in other communities to

fetch water as my village had no stream. For electricity and light, the moon, twinkling stars that lit the firmament at night billions of miles away gave us a glimpse of nature’s light.

While nature lighted its torch in the sky upon us, we used fire woods, palm kernel bye products, and local made palm oil fueled lamp full of smoke when darkness engulfed the earth. For health care we relied on herbalists and native medicine men that were gifted in the knowledge of herbs and roots to cure sicknesses.

“The firewood in a land cooks their food for them”. Though my village lacked government presence in provision of basic amenities, nature did not deny us of its benevolence as the land was very fertile and productive for agriculture. We never lacked food crops such as yam, cassava, maize, melon, vegetables and mushrooms. Mother Nature blessed and planted in our soil rich varieties of mushrooms which would sprout up seasonally for our own pleasure. As a child, I enjoyed going to the bush with my mates to search and pluck the mushrooms which our mothers used to prepare delicious soup for us. We also picked snails from the bush, sated traps and hunted for bush meats. My daughter and her siblings may not understand what a game and fun it were for us to pluck mushrooms, pick snails and hunt for rodents and grass cutters for food, as her knowledge of food provision is the grocery store nearby.

Being born during those times and under the circumstances I was born, affected my childhood, and I saw the world as a place of hostility, suffering, hardship, and a place one must take his fate in his own hands, and must inflict pain on himself to be able to survive. Also the hardships and the situation of life encountered at birth and childhood has formed and fashioned me to be a man who does not lean much on others but rather to always strive for a way to succeed as an independent person working to improve the lot of my family, village, and community. According to Myles Munroe, the deepest craving of the human spirit is to find a sense of significance and relevance. And the search for relevance in life is the ultimate pursuit of man.

TRIBUTE TO MY OGELE LAND

Out of you spring forth life
In you I first breadth of life
In you I first saw the ray of light
My first education was in you
Religion you gave to me
Good morals of life I found in you
Democracy I tasted in you
Ogelecracy you gave to me
Diligence and devotion to duty
You taught me
Obedience and loyalty
To that which is good and right
You gave to me

You taught me to strive for virtue
And to uphold sincerity of purpose and spirit
To embrace goodness
And to reject evil
To bring glory, honor
And not shame to you
Now, I am across the shore
Though far away
but my spirit lives daily in you
The foundation you laid for me
I daily build on

The candle of light
you gave to me is still on
Lightening the way for me
The good seeds you sowed in me
Are growing And will not be stunted
I am proud of you
And to be gotten of you
Though in a distant land
Unknown to you I am
Yet I dream of you daily
My spirit longs to
Tread my feet on you
And to drink wine from
The bowels of your love

Beloved Ogele
Dear Ogele
Great Ogele
I call on you thrice
Your child greets you
Great Okamgba
Great Osuke,
I bow before you
I beckon on you to still hold
The light for your child
Like a pilgrim
In search of success I am
In a foreign land
Searching for the diamond fleas

I will come back to you
When I have found
I will return better than I left
Great Ogele
my love for you remains strong
You are the Genesis of my life
In you will I drop the last breadth
And my remains will lie in you

When my life has run its circle
And I will sleep in you.

FAMILY HERITAGE: “The child that leaves the fate of his future in the hope of inheritance property sets himself up for a life of poverty”. (African proverb). I came from a family of twelve, two parents, seven sisters and two brothers in addition to myself. With only seven surviving, three sisters, two brothers and myself. I am the fourth among the surviving siblings with two younger sisters after me, and our mother. My Mother and her elder brother, papa Mark as we called him were the only children of their parents. Their parents were well to do in traditional wealth, having inherited many farm lands palm trees from their ancestors. They were seen as being quite wealthy as a man’s wealth in those days was measured by the quantity of lands, palm trees, goats, sheep, and yam barns that he possessed.

Father also had great ancestors as his grandfather Okamgba, was reputed as the best wrestler and great warrior. He also was the first son of Ogele, the founder and also related to the namesake of my village, Umuogele Father was the eldest among the five children of his parents, with two sisters and two brothers. My elite late uncle Ogu was the youngest among them. And had a towering personality in the family. He was a teacher before the war, a good sports man, the eye of the family and a voice for inspiration. As an infant, he was very fond of me as a smart boy and called me “Nwaoko” (man). But he died in the Biafra war. A loss that affected the entire family’s progress and future, as he would have helped father to sponsor our education. As a child, I have always thought that uncle Ogu’s long absence from home meant that he travelled. But it’s in later years that I came to realize that he indeed travelled to return no more as death is a journey of no return.

Uncle Ugwu was my fathers’ second younger brother. He never had a pleasurable marriage. His home was like a battle field as he always had a physical combat with the wife. To say that the wife was a nagging woman is not enough as it does not give one the true picture. Words poured from her mouth like water when she talked. No one could withstand the velocity of her mouth in normal circumstance not to think of when angry. Like a volcano, quarrel and fight could erupt between the couples any moment both day and night. We used to be alerted with the noise of utensils pushed down as they engage each other and the shout and cry for help from their children.

During such occasions, my parents would always rush to separate the opponents of the fight. Janet, as the wife is called, overshadowed her husband and was beyond the husband’s control. However she was not left to words only, but because she was strong and hard working, she possessed physical strength.

Her farm was never overgrown with weeds as was the case of some lazy women. She cultivated her farms timely. Despite her faults, she was diligent and jovial and never failed to dance east African beats from her Phillips radio. My uncle never enjoyed much marital bliss and then he died. No doubt the lack of peace in the home contributed to his passing away early. I used to think that if that's what marriage is like, is better for a man to remain single throughout his entire life.

We lived a community life where families and kindred lived together in one compound where buildings faced each other and at the centre of it all was the family hut which the elders used for rest and for receiving visitors. Living together meant that you were your brother's keeper as your neighbors' problem affected you. Uncle Ugwu's family problem used to disturb my parents. Our buildings were the mud plastered thatched houses. There was a clear mark of distinction and identity between the owners of zinc house and those who owned mud plastered thatched houses. Zinc houses were very few and were a mark of affluence. No indoor plumbing for us; our toilets were pit toilets located at the back of the yard. Fresh and dry leaves served as our toilet tissue, as they were used to wipe one's buttocks after easing yourself. Since there was no gas or electric cookers, there used to be floods of smoke in the rooms from cooking with firewood, a cooking method for food which far surpasses the method used in modern times.

The African's strong family tie is like a fraternity second to none. One must carry along his family and extended family almost in everything. Your brother's problem was your problem equally. Sometimes that affects our progress, and is one of the major differences between the black man and his white counterpart. I remember the story I was told about a hunter, who caught some white and black crabs and decided to let them go. He took them to the bank of the river and covered them with two baskets respectively and left. The following morning he came to the river, he was shocked to see that the white crabs have all jumped into the river and escaped individually. While the black crabs were holding each other struggling and pulling back each one that tried to escape. Because of the burden not to leave each other behind, they kept struggling and wasted time until the hunter came and took them. That is how carrying extended family responsibilities weigh down the African and set him back to pursue his personal goals.

MY PARENTS OCCUPATION: "He who is not bitten by sun or rain will be bitten by hunger". (African proverb). My parents were farmers, as my father inherited many farm lands from his ancestors. Though they were not affluent, but we never lacked food to eat. They labored very hard to fend for us. They cultivated cassava, yam, cocoyam, melon vegetables and other food crops. In the beginning of the farming season, father with the help of my eldest brother would cut and clear and allowed

the leaves and grass to dry before setting fire on it. Sometimes, the men used to take turns among themselves to help one another clear the bush during the farming season. On such occasions, the women would cook food and take to them at the forest. When they came back in the evening, they settled down to a well prepared evening meal accompanied with the evening's fresh palm wine. We as children sat on the mat and listened to the stories of the past, about their ancestors, slave raids, and colonial incursion into Igbo land.

Farming was a collective effort. My parents cultivated such food crops like yam, cassava, pumpkins, melon, okra and coco-yam. These crops were depicted as crops for women to cultivate while yam planting was a man's activity. And a man's prowess in my native Igbo village was measured by the number of yam barns he had. Our farming method was through manual labor. And the African large family system served a very useful purpose for that, as all hands must be on deck for farming. Sometimes we formed groups among age mates to assist our parents in farm works rotatively. My parents used to cultivate about 10 - 12 portions of land located at different places during farming season. And it was a hard task to accomplish.

My community had abundance of palm trees. And my father had palm trees located in the family lands. Harvesting and processing of oil palm fruits was assiduous. It was a communal exercise as the entire village usually set aside a day to harvest the palm. Climbing the wild and tall palm trees with ropes was such a rigorous and risky job. Sometimes the ropes may cut and the climber may fall and sustain serious injuries, bones fracture, or even die. Preparations were made before the day set out for the palm harvest. Families hired the professional palm harvesters, who came to survey the palm trees to know the locations in the village that contained the largest quantity of ripped palms. The village woke up at the sound of the heart pounding "ekwe", (wooden gong). At the prompting of the "ekwe", the men and women and their hired palm harvesters came out at the village square where the village head urges them to play to the rule and not to step into neighboring communities land to avoid trouble. Once the order was given to start, the harvesters rushed to the bush. It was like a war was declared, shouting and hissing while cutting the palm fruits. The families gathered the palm bunches together as the men harvested. The skill and labor involved was very tasking. Also the hazards and dangers involved, as sometimes they faced the dangers of snake bites.

After the fruits were taken home, then began another painstaking process of extracting the oil. Father would cut the bunches one by one to separate the fruits from the strands as to facilitate the hand picking, an exercise that required

carefulness as the thorn-like tissues of the fruit used to pierce our fingers causing injury and pain. Some days were set aside to pound the palm fruit in a deep wooden trough with a huge pestle after boiling the fruits to soften them on a fire in a large metal pot. Our eyes were blood red from the smoke emitting cooking fire as the pot needed to boil in order for the fruit to soften. If it began to rain, it made the situation worse as the fire needed to smoke and to roar with incredible heat. I vividly remember Father pounding the fruits so hard in the wooden trough with a thick, long wooden pestle, with sweat running down his body like water until the kernels covers peeled and were mashed together. Mother took time to separate the kernels during this process. Sweating profusely, she would squeeze strongly with her two hands to extract the oil. Though the palm fruit and palm oil serves very useful purposes, I never liked the suffering involved extracting the oil manually.

After the Nigeria civil war, in addition to farming, father went into trading. He traded on stock fish, oil, yam, rope and basket. As a man gifted to craftsmanship, he made the ropes used for climbing and harvesting the tall palm trees which he sold to the palm harvesters. These he combined with gari processing and marketing. He was well known in the entire village and community for his innovation, skill and prowess in processing cassava into gari. That was not an easy occupation as every process involved was done manually. Initially there was no cassava grinding machine in the village until late seventies. Before then, after the cassava were peeled with knife, he hired those who specialized in crushing the cassava on graters with bare hands which was a difficult and time consuming process. When the grinding machine came into operation, he increased his rate of garri production as he bought large quantities of cassava tubers from the local markets which he processed into gari and sold. As father traded on various stocks, there were frequent customers, and visitors to our compound, looking for oil, stockfish, yam, gari, rope, and basket.

THE PARENTS I KNOW: My father was always busy and had no time for frivolities as he had to work very hard to provide for his large family and ensure that we received college education. He was a man not given to wastage as he always strived to be thorough and innovative in any work he did. His diligence and dedication to secular activities were his devotion and commitment in religious allegiance. He was a pious Christian. Having embraced Christianity in his youth from the British missionaries. He never forgot to tell the story of a white missionary Whittler, whom he pronounced as “Witilo”.

As my parents were devoted Christians, they directed our attention towards the Christian faith from infant. One’s religion is sometimes determined by family and

place of birth. However this raises a research question, Are we victims of circumstances of birth? The answer to this question will go a long way to determine how our religion, culture, and social background affect us in life. Attending to early morning Saturday mission work was compulsory for us. And for no reason would we miss the Sunday church worship. I started the Monday, Tuesday, and baptismal classes quite early. A three year preparatory Bible study class and exam before baptism. After that I was baptized. That helped me to be very good in religious knowledge. I recited bible chapters in the church during children's harvest and in school during morning devotions.

My father's devotion and adherence to the Christian faith was very strong and has always motivated me. It made me to feel very reserved no to follow the crowd, also to realize that public opinion sometimes may not be always correct. For example that a tradition or custom is popular and upheld by a people may not mean that the same tradition or custom may be correct in principle. Abraham, as father is named, depicted the true qualities of his biblical predecessor. A man of faith and a friend of God. Father lived up to the dictates of his name and faith. And left a legacy for me in particular to always stand firm in that which is right. "A child reminds folks of his father"

"Fading away like the stars of the morning, losing their light by the bright day sun, so shall we pass from the earth and its toiling, only remembered by what we have done". The composer of that song may have had in mind the end of all men in mind. Father passed away on March 5, 2005. Though father is no more yet he is being remembered by his works. For example, he is well remembered in the village and it's environ as! Abraham the man who stopped the Mmaji custom and tradition in the community. Mmaji was a fetish custom practiced in some Igbo lands, which upholds that females who bear the name Mmaji are depicted as outcasts and dedicated to idols. And at death, are not supposed to be buried like normal dead person. As the head of Mmaji must not touch ground as that would invoke calamity to the land. The corpse must be taken to the forest and tied on a tree with a jar placed underneath to prevent the head touching the ground when it falls. Mmaji, my father's elder sister died in the sixties, and the villagers demanded that my father should comply with the traditional burial rituals. He stood against that sighting that as a Christian he would not practice fetish custom. He insisted that his late sister was a human being and must receive a normal burial.

The battle line was drawn between allegiance to fetish tradition and obedience to God and true Christian tenets. Father was firm and courageous in rejecting a practice that imposed a threat to his having a clear conscience towards God.

Sighting that he must obey God rather than men. The villagers abandoned the corpse with a threat that if he failed to comply within a week, something disastrous would happen to him as the gods would be angry. But to the surprise of everyone, he buried the sister's corpse alone. The village waited for one week for him to be struck dead by the deity, but nothing happened to him. Weeks ran into months and months into year and nothing happened to him. After that, my fathers' case was used as a reference point to abolish the tradition. Through that incident, I learnt from father, never to allow myself to be intimidated by a popular or public opinion and never to follow the crowd blindly.

"Childhood is like a stream, if it's not directed to its course it meanders and swallows its tail". When I look back to the past, I remember some things I did that upset my parents and things they liked about me. They always complained about my headiness. Having an attitude of resisting errands or doing things only when I liked. Incessant fights with my siblings and others outside. These made father to be hard on me. Father believed in "spoil the rod and save the child", philosophy", and I often felt his whips especially at nights. "If the bird learn to fly without perching the hunter learns to shoot without missing". It was difficult for them to get hold of me whenever I committed offence as I always out ran them during the day. Pursuing me was like trying to catch a chicken.

"He who pursues a chicken often falls but the chicken has to run". Therefore, in such incident, my father would ignore me during the day and allowed me to feed very well and go to bed. Thinking that he has forgotten, at night he would grab me, with no means to escape, and then he would recall the day's occurrence and caned me consequently. Often, I used to think that my father didn't love me due to the way he used to discipline me, but I later discovered otherwise. "The child a father loves he chastises". (Holy Scriptures) He really meant well for me, not only me but the rest of his children also, as he never displayed special love on any of us openly. Among the things my parents liked about me were lack of intimidation by age mate and others, never trailed behind my comrades, won prizes on Sunday school bible quiz tests, always asking probing and intelligent questions, was very useful in domestic works, and hardly ever was graced by sickness.

While father was strict and meticulous and never socialized much, my mother exhibited a right sense of humor, kindness and charity to a flaw. She is and always had been a lovely woman, caring, open hearted and ever ready to share whatever she had with others. Many native women and widows always came to ask her for food crops during farming season and harvest. Mother assisted father in farming works to fend for us. She was very active in women group activities both in the

village and church. She is talented in playing the ogene musical instrument and she played that for the native women dance group during ceremonies honoring the newborns babies of the community.

Also at different stages she traded on crayfish and dry fish which she trekked long distances to various markets to sell. On such occasions we always waited for her coming back as she used to buy for us cassava baked balls which she would share to us especially for carrying out our domestic duties while she was away. Among such activities were cracking the palm kernels which mother sold and used some to prepare palm jelly, which served as our cream. We also went too far away streams carrying calabash and pots to fetch water before she returned. Sometimes it may be a futile effort as the calabash may fail down from our head and break before we reached home because of long trekking. Fetching firewood from the forest used to be among the domestic chores we did while mother was away. Or we would go for farm weeding or gathering the melons together in the farm.

Mother never shut her door against people in need. The little she had, she shared with those who came to her. However, she shunned asking or borrowing from others, even in extreme cases she would prefer to manage with what she had. My parents thought us to be resourceful, self reliant and be content with what we have. Mother was my first educator, teacher, confidant as I felt so free to confide and share my heart feelings with her. Sweet mother, I will never forget the pains and sufferings you went through with father for me and the rest of your children. God bless the day father found you. And for this cause, I urge children all over the world to appreciate the labor and sacrifice of parents in nurturing them from infancy to maturity and the global family should acknowledge the unique role of a woman as a mother the only channel mankind comes into the world. To their credit I dedicate the composition below;

The Road We Came.

All men great and small
Colors, black and white
the strong and feeble
Beautiful and ugly
the wise and foolish
all the motley human family
came through your pathway
once crossed, never re-crossed.

A runway for life's plane
Flying life into existence
An ocean way large

Sailing life's boat and ship across
The railers rail
Railing men into earth's station
A road life's vehicle and footmen
daily run and walk to mother earth
Once crossed, never re-crossed

King and kings
Prince and princess
With the soaring swiftness of an eagle
On flight earth bound
Flew across your green line
Noblemen, captains and men of great
On earth bound ship
Sailed through your pathway
Once crossed, never re-crossed.

Life's express-way
A journey on your path
lasts for nine moons
A bridge between life
Never ever-been and ever to be
The mother womb, a mother bridge
The mother road
The road I know
The road we came
Once crossed, never re-crossed.

CUSTOMS AND FESTIVALS: My village and community had some custom and festivals that were observed and celebrated which I witnessed during my childhood. Community life was not that all work or boring, but had of moments of fun and recreation and through these occasions the people had happy moments and enjoyed themselves. Such occasions include, new yam festival, birth celebration, after birth care, marriage ceremony among others. These customs and festivals used to be happy events and appealed to me as a child but now I miss them and I wish I could relive them once more. Moreover, some of these festivals are no longer observed as the church has played down on them.

NEW YAM FESTIVAL: Yam is an edible crop in my place and was not a cheap crop to cultivate. And it's truly a man's job. Only one harvest a year. Unlike cassava, yam depended on its own tubers for reproduction. That entailed that a considerable portion of each harvest must be preserved for the next year planting. Yam was a very precious crop, if for any reason its yield failed; the community is destined to starvation. The harvest could only be as good as the labor. Chinua Achebe tells us in "Things Fall Apart" of Unoka who went to consult Agbala over

his yearly poor yam harvest. And the reply he got. The priestess replied. "You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with his gods and ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm. You Unoka are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machete and your hoe".

A rich yam harvest was a sign of prowess for a man. The community usually conferred such titles like "Diji", (yam husband) Eze ji (yam king) as mark of honor on outstanding yam farmers. New yam festival was one of the major festivals celebrated by community. It was a sacred event used in thanking God for a successful farming season and harvest. It marked the end of season of scarcity and the beginning of season of bounty. We looked forward to the day of this festival. Elaborate preparations were made. Families invited their relatives, in-laws and friends. The men made arrangement for palm wine and kola nuts. The women weeded and swept the road paths and the village square. On the festival day, the village wore a festival look. Some killed fowl or goat to prepare assorted varieties of yam dishes such as pounded yam, roasted and yam porridge, African salad, pepper soup and palm wine.

The sound of the ikoro gong summoned people to gather at the village square. The festival used to be declared open by the traditional ruler and elders who poured libation and offer kola nuts to their ancestors thanking them for granting the community a bounty harvest. Masquerades and cultural dances performed to entertain the people. Guests ate, drank and visited relatives and friends and everybody would be happy. For children, it used to be such a happy event for us to eat chicken parts and enjoy delicious foods once in a while. Also it offered opportunity for us to know our extended families. And according to Prof. Michael J.C. Echeruo (1979) "It is ceremony that adds grace and dignity to an occasion like this one". We celebrated new yam festival not because it would be impossible to eat our yams without festival but because of the significance this ceremony had in our live and culture.

BIRTH CELEBRATION: The birth of a new born baby was welcomed by ceremony in my tribe. It was a great joy for a woman to deliver safely. Especially the joy used to be more if it were a male, as the birth of a male child was considered more valuable as it was seen as a continuation of the family's heritage or lineage. Couples without a male child did not feel happy until they have one, at least someone to carry on with the family's name. It was believed that a girl would leave the family sooner or later to bear her husband's name but the boy is a permanent man of the family who would continue wherever the father stopped. On such occasion the husband would shoot his gun once or twice to announce the birth, while the mother in-law would start shouting with her hands,

tapping her cheeks;
Ooooh , ooooh, ooooh
Ooooh, ooooh, ooooh

On hearing that, her fellow women would rush to her compound and joined her to shout. Whoever that came would be robbed with native chalk, which today is replaced with powder. Later they would inform their in laws and they fix a date the women would go for the birth celebration which was usually during a new moon as the celebration used to last all night. The mother of the woman that gave birth would lead her fellow women to her in laws place with their music instruments which consists of Ekwe/Ogene formed from (hollowed log or tree trunk), Udu (clay jug), Opi (flute) and hand bell. They would sing and dance throughout the night while they would be entertained with well prepared pounded yam and dry fish soup, African salad and fresh palm wine. Also the women were usually given cash gifts which they shared among themselves. My mother was talented in playing musical instrument and she used to play the ogene for the women during such occasion.

As a child, I witnessed several of such ceremonies as I used to accompany my mother sometimes. Today, the birth celebration is no longer celebrated like it used to be, as the church child's dedication has taken over this. However, child birth remains a very vital part of any marriage in my community and among Igbo's. Many marriages have failed because the couple could not bear children. In some cases, because the woman did not bear a male child the men would marry new wives while the first wife either moved out of the matrimonial home or went back to her family and suffered the ridicule as it was a woman that bore the brunt of a failed marriage in most cases. In any case child birth was a thing of joy for couples and families that were privileged to have a baby especially for the new mother who through child bearing proved she had a fertile womb and thereby stamped her authority and feet strong in her husband's home and family.

AFTER BIRTH CARE :(Omugwo) is one of the major ceremonies observed in my community and by Igbo's generally after the birth of a child. It was a period meant to take adequate care of the mother. A period meant for the nursing mother to recover and replenish her health as to be able to breastfeed her baby well. Immediately after delivery, the new mother would be secluded for the *omugwo process*, which is a period during which a woman who had just delivered would be taken care of by her mother, husband and the extended family. Her mother would come over to stay with her during this period or in some occasions the nursing mother and stayed with her mother and family. Zillah my late elder sister used to come and stay with us during that time. The *Omugwo* process normally would last for three to four weeks depending on the place. During this period, the nursing mother is petted and her needs adequately attended to.

A special soup called "ofe nnenwa (baby's mother soup) a special delicacy prepared with spicy leaves, stock fish, dry fish, crayfish and a lot of pepper was

prepared for her. It was believed that a nursing mother needed a lot of pepper to keep her womb warm. As a child we used to jostle over the remains and left over of such delicacy. More also fresh palm wine was always available for visitors and the nursing mother who took sweet and fresh palm wine to enhance the flow of milk for breast feeding her baby. During such period the woman regained and was replenished with lost blood and energy during the process of child's delivery and evolved a new beauty to the admiration of her husband. When the mother would go back, the couple would buy her new wrapper, foodstuffs and gifts which she may share with her fellow women when she returned home. The *Omugwo* tradition is still practiced till date in my community and tribe and remains a strong factor among mothers as it has extended beyond the shores of Igbo land and Nigeria to Europe and America as mothers who have their daughters in abroad travel abroad for that these days.

THE BIAFRA WAR: "War is delightful to those who have had no experience of it" – Deciderus. I witnessed the Nigeria/Biafra civil war in the eyes of a child but the memories still linger and no cleaner can erase it off from my mind. The war which lasted for about three years is a watershed in the history of Nigeria and a big blow to my tribes men, Igbo's, as there may be hardly any family, village or community in Igbo land that did not count some head loss. The rich people cause war while the poor die for it. The devastation effect of the war to the nation, towns, villages and families were great. Every family was given a cup of bitterness and grief. "The military don't start wars. Politicians start wars" –William West Moreland. It doesn't require any essential skill or power for the politicians, to sit on the house of legislature to pass the bill for war and urge young soldiers to go and fight. But ironically, when the war develops and thousands of young soldiers and innocent citizens are killed, it won't be they that declared the war who die."If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm any hostility". (Unknown)

A part of me died in that war. And I wish it doesn't happen again. That is why, when I learnt that my young nephew has enlisted in the American army and was sent to Iraq, cold shivers ran up and down my spine. I lost my dear uncle Patrick to the Biafra war. An uncle who was very fond me. He was conscripted by the Biafra soldiers at the heat of the war when the Biafra army and land was caving in to the superior fire power of the Nigerian army and its allies. I remember it was a Sunday; three soldiers came and picked him from home. It was a surprise they refused to take him into the army voluntarily as he went for recruitment like other young men in the beginning of the war. Despite his tall height and athletic build he was rejected. As I was told, initially you needed to know someone in the army or politician to be recruited. But as the tide turned against Biafra, even infants were conscripted into the army. That was the last I saw him. My mother used to carry food to the military base they were camped before he was taken from there. Both men and women contributed and fought for the Biafra cause. The women used to

carry food to their sons and relatives at the military base. The old men at home used to do combing of the enemy in the bush at night. After years and after the war, he didn't return and no one heard from him, as a child, I have always thought that he travelled and would return someday but it was later in life that it dawned on me that he indeed travelled but this time, never to return in life time.

“War doesn't determine who is right just who is left” (unknown) my uncles case was just one case in a million. Apart from soldiers who died in the warfront, at home families were wiped off during bomb raids and shelling, children lost their parents suddenly and parents lost their children, wives losing husbands and husbands losing wives. Death was ever near in Biafra land, it knew no limit, even unborn children in their mothers fetus who never saw day light nor knew anything about geography, government and politics, whom their only crime was that their mothers were in the geographical entity called Biafra were not spared of the Nigeria's bomb and bullets. No place was spared, people died at the market, church and farms as those places were bombed and attacked any time. Those bombs and bullets could not kill were killed by hunger, starvation and kwashiorkor. We learnt to take cover in the bush like chickens against the scavenger. We hid in bunkers dug around the bush like rats and rabbits. We ate lizards as meat and raw cassavas as food. Everything was eatable during war time. Nature was kind to us during this crisis period. Things you would not dream of eating in times of peace, you ate in times of war. It was all for survival.

“The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war” – Desiderius Erasmus. When there is war everyone try to safeguard his own head. The war engulfed my community and we evacuated. But where were we running to when the enemy has encircled the whole land? My parents tied a few luggage and we left with other people heading to no place in mind. Mothers with children tied on their back, load on head with other siblings following behind. My father carried me on the frame of his rodge bicycle with my legs tied to the frame, like a lamb meant for sacrifice and with a heavy box at the back, he dragged the bicycle along to no definite destination, but walked along with the surge of wearied and helpless multitude heading to a destination of fate unknown.

Having been displaced from our homes and communities. We camped as refugees at camouflaged churches and schools. At night we would scramble to find a space to lie on the floor as the hall was full beyond capacity. No day or night passed without people dying in the camp. I remember my parents waking me up from sleep on discovering that I was sleeping beside a dead woman. The woman whom I was holding thinking she was my mother was dead. The poor woman may have died out of hunger and starvation, as total blockade was part of the strategy and weapon the Nigerians applied to annihilate the Biafra's. For Nigerians, “the object of war is not to die for your country but to make the other bastard die for his” – General George S. Patton.

It takes two to make a fight and in every war there must be casualties on both sides. Uncle Patrick and the unknown dead woman that lay beside me were victims and casualties of war, they died for Biafra. And the thousands of young Nigerian soldiers who were cut short when the flower of life never flourished by the Biafra Ogbunigwe (mass killer), an improvised deadly missile manufactured and used by Biafra's which dealt a deadly blow to the Nigerian soldiers. They all died for their country. For Nigeria, one Nigeria was a task that must be accomplished even by genocide. For Biafra, it was a war for survival and liberty. For me, "there never was a good war, or a bad peace" – Cicero. War is not good; it has a lot of evil relatives. It destroys life and properties, it retards progress and development, and it introduces crime in the society. Once a nation fights a war, it could never be the same again. Forty two years after the Nigeria civil war, the after effects lingers. One of the worst effects of the war is armed robbery. Before the war, Nigerians did not know about armed robbers. But after the war armed robbery started and like a hurricane traversed the whole parts of the country. Armed robbery gave birth to kidnapping and has graduated to a more hydra headed counterpart, terrorism.

Forty two years after, the war bells are ringing again in Nigeria. While the former Biafra leader, and my hero, Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu a man I subscribe to his qualities, ideals and vision for the nation Nigeria lie dead and is waiting to be interred to mother earth, the Northerners that started the pogrom and massacre of the Igbo's in 1966 are at it again in the name of their Islamic group named Gboko Haram, which means "western education is evil". The group which has unleashed mayhem in the country, has bombed churches, killing in majority Igbo's and has ordered Igbo's leaving in Northern Nigeria to leave. A threat that should not be waved off by a wave of hand. Since their lives and properties are in danger. Especially life, not just property. And it's better to take a wise step and safeguard life first. Because life makes meaning and you can restore anything you may have lost. But first you must be alive to have the opportunity of recovering things you have lost. I feel the pains of my kinsmen. I stand for the unity and indivisibility of Nigeria as a nation. But as Malcolm X said, "of what use is it to seek the brotherhood of someone who does not want it". According to Cicero "I prefer the most unjust peace to the most righteous war". Let peace reign in Nigeria. "Today the real test of power is not the capacity to make war but the capacity to prevent it" - Anne O! Hare Mc Connick.

EDUCATION: "Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army" (Edward Everett) there is no one without education. There are formal and informal types of education and every man in his life time is expected to acquire one form of education or another. The informal education is the one received at home otherwise known as home training, and this is through ones parents. The formal education is the training one acquires outside home and parents, in school, college and University. The first education I received in life was from my parents especially from mother as a child is closer to her mother.

I started my primary education in the seventies after the Biafra war. And I remember teachers came to homes asking parents to send their children back to school. I attended primary school at different places because my village had no school. Going to school in those years was very challenging for kids from poor families and communities. With the extended and large family system with so many kids and mouths to feed, clothe, and school fees was not easy for most parents to afford. Many children whom their parents could not afford their fees dropped out of school. In some families, young girls were subjected to early marriages. Sometimes, we were driven out of school before fees were paid. Most of us wore poor and worn out uniforms to school as there was no money for new ones. And many kids came to school without shoes or sandals. We trekked long distances to attend school at neighboring villages. For us, the school you attend depends on the one the majority of children from the village attended as we always went in group. At a stage, I stayed with my late elder sister who was married in another community about 5km from my village. During that period I schooled at Nenu Community primary school for about a session. Among my class mates then were Chisimdi Odingwa and Hon. Eziuche Ubani a journalist, politician and member of the Nigeria legislature.

Among the teachers I remember in that school, were sir Njoku, a red eye ex Biafra soldier and sir Ogbonna who were known for their tough disciplinary measures. Back home, I schooled at Ohuhu Ekwuru primary school a school in another neighboring village. I remember madam Ezengwa, my first teacher in primary one and the head master who was nicknamed sir Odim unto (it sweets me) this name came about because when he was flogging scholars, he would ask you to say that you enjoyed the stroke of cane that landed on your buttocks. We were always scared of him. I remember how we used to go and fetch fire wood for him and how scared we would be to deliver that at his home. As the fear of sir Odim unto was the beginning of wisdom for every scholar in that school. I later changed to Amaisii community primary school Mgbokonta where I completed my primary education. I remember the high standard of learning and education we had in primary school. The morning devotion before classes was very interesting. The teachers would line up the according to classes and we did marching parade like soldiers, to the scintillating beating and sound of the school band. At the prompt of the band boys and the school master who was on the side giving orders, you would hear songs like;

“Nigeria is a land of great liberty
Great liberty great liberty
Nigeria is a land of great liberty
And some of you know it well
Oh Niger”

“ Oo my home Oo my home
Oo my home Oo my home
When shall I see my home?
Oo my home
When shall I see my native land?
I will never forget my home”.

With these motivating songs we marched in to the school main hall for morning devotion. During the devotion, we sang more songs, two or three scholars that may have learnt poems and recitations are called to deliver their memorized poems and recitations before the full hall with all eyes and attention focused on the person. Sometimes the student may lose concentration due to stage fright and ended up half way. The successful ones would receive hand clapping according to the order of the school master. That used to encourage others to learn at home. Also we used to sing the old Nigeria National anthem during the morning devotion.

“Nigeria, we hail thee, our own dear native land,
Though tribe and tongue may differ,
In brotherhood we stand,
Nigerians all are proud to serve our sovereign motherland....”

That used to be the Nigeria’s National anthem from 1960 to 1978. And now, “Arise O compatriots”. I sang it last in the seventies during my primary school days. All these we learnt and sang during the morning devotions. That was a way of showing the spirit of patriotism and love for motherland in us. I remember it was in such occasion that a school mate, Chidi Ikpeama recited a short poem which stuck to my memory until today. The poem was,

“I have seen a scene
In the scene of river sin
Where a mother can murder her own child”.

With the methods our teachers thought us; I developed interest in poetry and literature at early stage and started writing and composing poems from class one in college. Among the Schools attended at this stage, Amaisii primary school Mgbokonta made the major impact on me. There were very intelligent boys and girls in school and there were stiff competition for the first tenth in exams. Also I met Chisom (late) Amadi, Nkasi (late) who were my childhood friends. Because we were very little and young and there were adults in class, our teacher always gave us position in the front row. There were mature boys and girls, some in their late twenties and thirties still in primary school. And we the younger ones suffered

bullies from them. Therefore the three of us were always close and together and would always join together to fight and defend ourselves from any bully.

MY PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: Among the teachers, my most memorable teacher was madam lhesiulo who was very nice and fond of me because of my skill in telling short stories, poems, and bible recitations. She was like the good shepherd who would go looking for any of her sheep who were not present and accounted for. I will never forget the day she came looking for me at home due to my absence from school for a period due to ill-health. When she arrived, I was outside and half naked, playing football with an orange in the sand with other children. She fondly called to me, "Onuoha, Onuoha," and it was like God calling Adam in the Garden of Eden. Once I noticed her, I ran away with my heels almost touching my neck. She was a teacher who really cared for her wards. Many years have gone since I saw her last but I will always remember her as one who helped to direct me towards the right path to follow at the tender age in life."A hen never forgets who plucked her feathers during rainy season", (African proverb).

But wherever I may be I would always remember her as one who helped to direct me to the right course to follow at the tender age in life."A hen never forgets who plucked her feathers during rainy season", (African proverb). Also, I remember the headmaster, Nwagbara whom his nose discharged cigarette smoke like the exhaust pipe of his rickety Beetle Volkswagen car. He was like a terror to us as everyone was afraid of him because of the way he flogged school children mercilessly. He would walk into class to teach Agriculture with bundle of cane on both hands. He would ask, if a plant or animal die and decay, what would it add to the soil? He would not waste time to say you, you and you with his cane pointing at the ignorant scholars, and while you don't provide the answer, he would descend the cane on you saying, humus!

The standard of education was high, we were thought about personal hygiene as the teachers used to inspect our teeth and nails and if found dirty, you would be punished. Also we learnt things about the world in general studies and Geography. We knew about the seven continents in the world. We sang Africa's seven major rivers, Nile, Niger, Senegal, Congo, Orange, Limpopo Zambezi. We knew about rivers outside Africa, the Mississippi's and Amazons the major rivers in Africa and other parts of the globe and about the biggest mountains in Africa and beyond. The Kilimanjaro, Ararat among others. That is why it surprises me now when an adult in Europe asks me question like is Africa in Nigeria? I would wonder if his teacher did not teach him the difference between a country and a continent while in primary school.

CHILDREN AND INDEPENDENCE DAY: May 27, children's day and October 1, Independence Day used to be very important days during my primary school days. As the primary and college students celebrated these two events with match pass competition. This used to be a delight to watch the children from various schools gathered at the zonal head quarters to perform match pass and parade competition. The teachers would always drill us and we practiced for many days before the main day. The best among the boys and girls were selected to represent the school while the rest would cheer them up. As there were no vehicles to convey us, we usually take off on bicycles in group very early in the morning rode about 8 – 10 km to the headquarters.

However, it used to be a colorful celebration featuring the military band that supplied heart-pumping music for the parade while the children marched past while keeping time to the rhythm, swinging their arms left and right and as they approached the podium where the governor's representatives were standing, the children would turn their heads towards the podium to salute the Officials. The Boy Scouts, Boy's Brigade, Girls Guide, Junior Missionary Volunteers, Red Cross and college students would also parade across in an attractive formation. The best schools were awarded prizes at the end of the ceremonies. The last day of school and the long vacation that followed our promotion to a higher class was always memorable. It used to be a day of mixed feelings for many school children. This was the day the promotion examination results were called where parents and older siblings back from college would be there dressed smartly and looking good, to listen to the results. The presence of these college students used to inspire and motivate me to study harder as I wished to be like them some day.

COLLEGE EDUCATION: I entered secondary school (college) in 1977 at about the age of ten having passed the common entrance and the school leaving certificate examinations. Passing the common entrance used to be hard. We were eight from the school that passed the exam that year and four of us from the same school, Chisom (late) Theophilus, Princewill who later became my close friends and classmates were posted to Anglican Boys Grammar School Nbawsi. Leaving home and parents to live on my own in a boarding house far from home for the first time was not easy. I felt for my parents, how they would cope through farming and the gari business to keep us in school especially when two of my elder siblings, Sarah and Fineboy were already in colleges and with my eldest brother Josiah still learning a trade, also with my younger siblings Oluchi and Glory in primary school. What an added burden and vacuum my leaving home would create, as I have become very useful, helpful and supportive to them in the absence of my elder siblings from home. I was very helpful to my father in the gari occupation and now

that I was leaving who would help him. These they considered also and they did not find it easy for me to leave. Despite the difficulties, I was interested to go to college as to acquire higher education and receive respect accorded to college students. More also I wanted to experience the college life Fineboy my brother used to tell me about. I wanted to participate in disco dance, a special privilege college students used to enjoy during vacations. On such occasions they used to cover the half walled school hall with fresh palm fronds to ward off unauthorized entrants. However we used to play peeping eyes by peering through the tiny openings on the covered palm fronds. As a school boy I have always wished to partake in that some day.

The day of departure came, right from home I put on the college uniform, black knickers and white shirt with my Cortina sandal shoe carrying my metal school box and bucket accompanied by father who was taking me to the school. It was an emotional scene saying goodbye from home. I remember my mother and younger sisters bursting into tears as we boarded the vehicle that conveyed us to the school about 20 miles from home. I was deeply touched seeing mother shedding tears while I was waving hands to relatives who were wishing me goodbye. That was my first time of making a journey by car. I was startled when I look out through the window it appeared the grass and trees were running along with the vehicle. As we arrived to the school gate, while undergoing clearance process, three senior students rushed to us and one of them hurriedly collected my luggage and asked me to follow him. He introduced his name as John Echeji who later became my school master, and father was asked to go. Father reminded me to be a good boy and left. From there, the journey into a new life, a new path, road and a new world began for me. A path that would define, develop and put me on track to know the route and course to steer my ship.

From then I was born into a new family, village and community where my teachers were my parents and my fellow students as brothers. A journey to acquire education and knowledge that would impact and change my life. A leveling ground for the children of the rich and poor to sleep under the same roof, drink and eat from the same pot. A place where family background and parental upbringing are put to test. An environment where bad association could corrupt good manners and bad manners is amended also. And I resolved that if it is going to be it's up to me. My school was a boarding school and there were day students also.

On the first day, I felt so lost; the environment was new and strange to me. There were beautiful lawns with Melina trees, whistling pines path ways, buildings comprising hostels, academic blocks, laboratory, library teacher's quarters and

more. I felt like a hen in a new environment until I met with the three boys from my former primary school who were already getting used to the new world, having resumed before me. I followed them wherever they went and we were always together. My first baptism of fire was from senior Nnadozie, as you dare not call a senior student by name without attaching the prefix senior. He was a class two student, he called me back as we walked pass each other, and asked who I am and what class, and I mentioned my name and class. Immediately he shouted, you fox, why did you touch me with your tail?

Must you kneel down?

While I was kneeling down two of his friends came and asked what happened, he replied;

Imagine this fox,

Touching me with his dirty tail

What an abomination! his friend exclaimed

Come on, lie down

Who gave you the temerity and audacity?

To touch a senior student with your un-cut tail?

But senior, I have no tail,

Shaaaarrrrrrp, imagine..... An imp trying to argue with a senior.

I kept lying down until a class four student who saw what was going on came and rescued me. After that episode, I started getting used to incessant punishments from senior students, especially the class two students who were a torn in the flesh of class one students. Two days after my father took me to the school, I returned home. My parents were surprised to see me back. I could not stay behind alone as my three friends went home instead of going for the match pass for the independent day. Mother had sympathy for me after I narrated my ordeal in the hands of senior students and my experience for the two days spent. Father was not happy that I came back so soon. He encouraged me to go back and face the college education like other students and letting me know that the senior students also passed through the same experience. According to Albert Einstein, "education is not received. It is achieved". More also, I remembered the song that we used to sing while in primary school;

"Education is sweet

But is difficult to obtain

He that has patience

Will obtain Education

If his parents have money"...

After that, and other various incidents, I resolved to face the challenges ahead of me in college. "The larger the hurdle, the greater the glory of defeating it" (Moliere). The college had six dormitories for students namely, Ibiam house, Dimeari, Okonkwo, Okwuosa, Nwachukwu and New house. I was in Ibiam house and lived in the cubicle as prefects lived in cubicles with their boys.

John Echehi my school master was newly appointed the school's light prefect. And serving a prefect had some privileges. It protected you from incessant punishment and bullying from senior students as your other colleagues were prone to. It restricted you from fetching water for the refectory; it saved you from washing plates from other senior students. Also you have the opportunity to enjoy extra meal from your master's dish as prefects had the privilege of collecting extra meals during meal time. But I never enjoyed an extra meal as a prefect boy as my master had a large stomach and hardly left anything on his plate. My college being an all boy's school had many big boys who were Biafra soldiers at one time. Sometimes you felt as if you were in a military school. And the younger and junior students sometimes suffered bullying from the mature students.

WELCOMING THE NEW STUDENTS: The first social gathering I attended in college was the annual welcome ceremony by the School to receive the new students. This was the day we were officially born and admitted to the school. The whole students gathered at the school main hall together with the teachers, and the principal, I. Nwandu on his well tailored black suite and a nice hair cut, complete with a path to one side, stood out from the rest of the school staff and prefects accompanying him like a president as they entered the hall in absolute silence. The principal commanded an over whelming influence on the students that some said he used charm. He addressed the students and highlighted the rules and regulations of the school and the need for us to take our studies seriously. After the principal left, the senior prefect, Friday Apollos, who wielded much influence and was feared by the students addressed the students and emphasized that no act of indiscipline would be tolerated from any student.

The most remarkable event of the day for me was the ball room dance in the evening where the hall was full of students both old and new, and the students danced to the sweet meaningful reggae songs. Class one students were asked to dance alone, and many felt so shy to take the dance floor, but they were forced. I remember dancing to the sweet lyrics of Eric Donaldson's, "The land of my birth", Sweet Breeze's, "Palm wine the tapper remember me" and Jimmy Cliff, "You can get it if you really want". Songs that motivated inspired and stuck to my heart so much. These were the music of my time, these were days when music had

messages that touched the heart and I danced the music of my age. I danced to the admiration of many senior students. And from then many senior students came to like me.

THE SCHOOL CLUBS: As students, we participated in extra curricula activities. We had various clubs like the, scripture union, martial arts, the Red Cross, boys scout, and press club among others. I belonged to the press club because of my love for writing. While in class one, I used to compose and write letters for some class mates to their parents or friends. The press club was like the college's watch dog. We posted articles and cartoons on the school's notice board. The club helped us to develop the skill of writing. Some of my mates, who belonged to the club, are today top press men and media practitioners in Nigeria and abroad. I remember people like Hon. Eziuche Ubani who was a press secretary to the former president in the Nigeria's house of reps. and is presently a legislator in the same house. Also Andy Ekugo who has been one of the editors in This Day newspaper and others to mention just a few.

SPORTS AND GAMES: The college institution served as a veritable ground for students to develop their talents and to fish out good athletes, sports men and footballers. My school participated in various games and sporting competitions, such as athletics, tennis, javelin, jumping, football among others. We had inter-house sports, and football competitions. Also we used to have inter-college sports and football competitions both on state and national levels. I liked football most among the games. And I played in my school mosquito team as it was the list category for young boys. I remember some students who distinguished themselves in sports and games. People like Kobrete Charles who was the best in 800metres and represented the school and state in national competitions, Kingsley Nworisa, a very good boxer, and Anthony Eguzo one of the best footballers the school produced.

INDULGENCES: Despite the high level of discipline and good morals the teachers tried to impart in us, it was not easy to avoid pressure from peer groups and other students to involve in some indecent acts and behaviors contrary to the school rules and regulations. Many of us took to smoking and drinking, jiving and clubbing, writing letters to India for occultism practices, and other vices. I was cut in the web, and started smoking cigarette from class two, as a way of beefing up my social status. I probed the folly in those vices so that none would be new to me later in life. I was very popular and mixed with some known bad boys and seniors above my age. I probed the folly in those vices so that none would be new to me later in life. But I was very careful never to let my parents notice as that would have been the end of my career.

We gave ourselves nicknames. We had names like, Corruption, Viper, Rasta, Jew man, No two ways, Man die go, Movement among others. I was called Movement, a name that has stuck to me until today. Sometimes you are inclined to behave like the name you bear. I was always on the move, travelling from one place to another, even my style of walking changed. "A fly that has no adviser follows the corpse to the grave". Many students were carried away by some of these indulgences and became dropouts, some finished and proceeded into the larger world and ended worse. Despite peer group pressure in College, I never allowed myself to go over board as I was always guided by the biblical principles my parents thought me. Which was like a string on my waist always pulling me back even till today? "Train a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will never depart from it" Proverb 22, 6(Holy Scripture)

MY MENTORS: The best way to success is to follow the footsteps of those who have journeyed before us. My major mentors in life have been, God. I have always had strong faith in my God. And has always put him first in whatever I do. After God, another mentor I have had is self. I have always befriended myself and have confidence in myself. Knowing that if it's going to be it depends on me. I never belittle or write myself off in anything. Even when I fail, I feel much spurred to continue. I make self expedition and stir up to discover my person and inherent qualities. And I have come to realize that my life has a literary value but unknown to me before. Also my parents and family background have been my motivation. While in college I was guided not to allow anything to stop me half way as I wouldn't let my parents down and their efforts are in vain. Having no affluent family background was a kind of motivating factor to strive to succeed and recreate my own world.

I wanted to re-write my family history and status. More also, my senior sister Sarah and husband Tony Ajiere have always served as good mentors for me. I have always drawn a great deal of lesson from Sarah's life. Her life's experiences revolved around her name. Her choice in marriage was a big lesson. She rejected all the now people and the raves of the moment and settled for a man who was yet to find his feet. The challenges they faced after marriage, but always together as one they forged ahead. Sarah's strong faith in God which has seen her through. Her astute resources management qualities and ideas. Tony's unequalled fighting spirit and dogged determination surmounting all obstacles to rise from nothing to something above his equals. Their progress from one height to another has always gingered me.

Among my other mentors was Hart Emerole, the first elite my village had. He was a principal and educationist. I always admired the standard of living and quality of training he gave his children and family. Also, I have always liked some good writers and authors. I read Chinua Achebe's books, and wished I could write like him or even better. I heard stories about Zik of Africa and his exploits as a

journalist and writer. I became very much motivated. His achievements have always goaded me. Also among my mentors include my college principal I. Nwandu who would always encourage us to study hard as to be leaders of tomorrow. With all these mentors, and seeing that I have always liked writing and stories, I did well in arts subjects. Realizing that all my mentors excelled through education, hard work and self determination. I therefore decided that I must obtain a university education as to enable me achieve my goal. "Really great people make you feel that you too can become great". Mark Twain. Anything that has a beginning must have an end. I completed my college education successfully and stepped into the world.

The college education was a stepping stone to go for greater heights in life. With the good friends I met and exposure to information about the world and other continents, realization of the white man's perception of the negro as servile and inferior, 19th century colonization of Africa through missionaries and mercantile was an extension of the white man's exploitation of Africa's human and natural resources. Armed with all these realizations, I was packaged to step into the larger world. Despite the hardships encountered, the youthful exuberances, adventures and fun we had, I would say that my college days were the most pleasant stage in my life. And I wished I could go back to those days and relive them once more. But now, I can only say ,Oh happy days come back to me. And I wish the happy moments would come back to me again.

AFTER COLLEGE: The desire to get ahead is a compelling fashion in today's world. (Myles Muroe). I graduated from college in 1982. Like most fresh school leavers, I believed I could take the world from there. Though I had my dreams and goals to pursue a university education, I could not proceed further immediately to the university to pursue my career due to lack of sponsorship. I thought about the possibilities of getting a job in the highly saturated and competitive Nigerian job market in which you must have a god father before you get a job. In other not to hang my fate on the hand of any employer or waste time in searching for elusive job, I decided to do a vocational training course on Architecture and Engineering draftsmanship. Armed with that, I reasoned it would be easier for me to create job and employment for myself and make money to further my education.

After I qualified as a draftsman, I worked as architectural and project supervisor for Sartone Associates and later as a pipe line engineering draftsman in some oil servicing companies. I remember taking the first money I earned to my parents who blessed me and prayed for my greater success. After a few years of practice, I bought my first car, a Volkswagen and later a Mercedes Benz. I have always wanted to be my own boss, an employer and entrepreneur rather than an employee. After working for some companies I decided to float my own private company. And I established my own enterprise. I was into building design, auto

cad, and construction and contract services. And I handled some big projects for some of my clients.

I have always placed a great importance to education and had always had the vision to further my education to the university level as to enable me learn more and excel in life. In 1995, I gained admission to study Mass communication in Rivers state University of Science and Technology. I have always been convinced that my true profession is that of journalism and writing as most of my mentors were journalist and writers. When I was in college, I had the reputation of being a writer and novelist. Journalist and novelist have responsibilities in balancing truth in the society. This is a more relevant profession for me because it offers a larger spectrum and platform for me to contribute to national and international issues and not be stalled. For me journalism profession and writing is like priesthood, where you had to be called and anointed. And I believe I was called and anointed right from the womb to shine the light for others to see. My innate desire not to settle for the good when I know I can get the best made me to abandon my University Degree program in the final year and took a leap to abroad. And being not satisfied with what I have achieved or where I am, I decided to go back to the Atlantic International University to earn my degrees. And that is the basis for this project.

STRIKING MEMORIES IN MY CHILDHOOD AND LIFE: Life they say is not “a bird of roses. My life has witnessed and passed through both sorrowful and pleasant scenes which left some striking memories on me. Death is a spoiler and the worst enemy of mankind. Whenever and wherever it visited it has always left behind trails of sorrow and pain. And in my life I have had some bitter pills of death in many occasions but among all, two left the bitterest memories behind. At the other hand life is a mixture of bad and good, sad and happy moments and no condition remains the same. For everything in life there is a time. Time to laugh and time to cry. Despite the sorrowful moments, I have also had some pleasant memorable moments in my life which among all is my marriage. I would relate some of these striking moments in the subsequent paragraphs below.

THE DEATH OF MY SISTERS. Memories of certain incidents in life could be cruel and upsetting to relive. They are better forgotten. But the pain hardly goes. It’s hard to recover from the sorrow of losing a dear one. Time they say is the healer of physical, psychological and emotional injuries, but the loss of my four sisters is a torture I have to bear for life. Especially the most two senior ones, Chioma and Zillah . Ngozi and Philistia died when I hardly knew them. While Chioma and Zillah died when I have been acquainted to them so much. The irony of it all is that both Chioma and Zillah died during child delivery because of not having good health

care or maternity in my community. Chioma died sometime in 1970 after the civil war. I used to live with her as her husband's place was just a stone throw from home. She was such a beautiful lady and real resemblance of my mother. It's painful that she died in the process of child delivery due to lack of health care system.

To say that Chioma's death was painful is to say the least compared to Zillah's death. The year 1985 proved to be exactly a cruel year to me and my family history. Zillah as the first daughter and eldest sister was like a second mother to us. She used to be a rallying point, as we always obtained most useful advice from her. I learnt she was such a brilliant student during her school days. But all those qualities were cut short by death. She died while giving birth to the tenth child which was twins. The news about her death was so shocking to me and the family. The whole village went berserk with grief on the event of her death. My mother was uncontrollable with sorrow. It is said that a man eats his sorrows in his heart; in this case it wasn't so. As Brutus said, "no man bears sorrow better", I could not bear it either. I wept. It was one death that really touched me most. It's hard to recover from the sorrow of losing a dear one. And I dedicate this composition to my departed sister.

TO A DEPARTED SISTER

Many years ago you left
The clutchy hands of death
Could not allow you
To leave a word for your loved ones
Your departure was painful
You entered the way of womanhood
But could not come out of it
You paid the price of the curse
Laid on the proto woman
You departed in pain and sorrow

The seed of the woman you labored
To bring to the world
Rather than come with you
Or go back alone
Preferred to take you
To the world beyond
There was pandemonium
On the eve of your departure
The entire village was shaken
On hearing the news

To some it sounded like a tell – tale
Your age mates never believed

The family went berserk with sorrow
To others it was like a bad dream
That later became a reality
What a surge of uncontrollable tears
Before passing on you had wished
To speak to mother
But the death messenger
Jealous of your beauty
Was in a hurry to take you away

And he never waited for her to arrive
You resisted leaving
But you were under the grip of a colossus
Like an obedient child you obeyed
And dropped the last breath
Your remains were laid in the family hut
Many years have gone by now
Yet no memorial for you
No epitaph was written on your grave
No wreath was lead

No picture to behold your charming beauty
Though in mother lies your portrait
For you were her images
But in me remain your pigments
The glimpse of your charming beauty
Caught with my infant eyes
Remains evergreen
You were caring and tenderly
I wished you had left behind
A living image of yourself

The man you shared your life with
Has lost memory of you
Beclouded with a new vow
To a second comer
Has forgotten his first love
Men sometimes for passion
Forget the dead
Never mind out of many souls
You are remembered by one
Your name remains in the family tree
And will pass over to later generation

Could the dead be given a little time off?
To visit the land of the living
You will be amazed with the changes
And developments that have taken place
I am now a young man
No longer the snotty toddler

Frolicking on sand
You used to know
I am at the noon of life
Papa has gone
And mama has far gone the evening

They were father and mother to you here
But son and daughter
To be to you hereafter
And their younger brother would I be
When life's metamorphosis
has run its course on us
If the departed are happy where they are
Happy you may be
And happier we would be
When later we meet again.

MY MISSING RIB: "He that finds a wife has found a good thing and obtained favor from God" Proverbs 18, 22 (holy bible) looking for a wife and my marriage is one of the most pleasant memories in my life. And I believe marrying to a right partner is the best thing that could happen to any man or woman. For me the road to marriage was a long journey and delayed due to coming to abroad. Before I found my wife, I fell in love with a girl whom I thought I would have married but she later married another man. According to the writer of the novel African night entertainment, women are like clothes in a market place, the first to price it may not be the buyer. Marriage is an adventure and a leap into the unknown in deed bliss if one finds his real missing rib.

My marriage was by recommendation. I never knew or met whom I was marrying before paying the bride price. I was living in Madrid Spain while my wife was in Lagos Nigeria. Her cousin in Spain whom I knew told me about her and gave me her contact in Nigeria. And I never wasted time to contact her. And the first thing that struck me was her voice. It was like a balm and a soothing ointment to my soul. The sweetness of her voice could disarm and melt the heart of the worst terrorist. I sent a friend in Lagos to locate and see her. And he sent a mail asking me to go and pay her dowry immediately without any delay. That she is just the one for me. Later on we exchanged pictures, and I found her very delightful. We did our courtship on phone and through emails. I informed my family members. But the question always asked was have you seen her? How could you marry someone you never met? For me the oddity of this subject was the clincher as what may seem odd to others catches most my interest. Life is a script, a script in which we have the privilege liberty of deciding characters we want to play.

I made a leap into the unknown and it was blissful. I married on June 12, 2007. It was like a película (film) the first day I met my wife at the airport. The marriage date and arrangements have been scheduled and made before my arrival. On the arrival date, my wife was supposed to be at the airport to welcome me. We only knew through picture and I had her photo in my pocket. But sometimes pictures do not tell the real you. On coming out to the arrival lounge, I expected the first person to meet me would be my wife. So when a lady with my friend who gave me good report about my wife initially rushed to welcome me, I grabbed her to myself and kissed her warmly and she responded accordingly without any resistance. I held on to her thinking she was my wife. But did not know she was not the one I came for.

My people say that, when the shaking hand passes the elbow it turns to another thing. Not until my wife's elder sister and my friend who were watching with a kind of astonishment and may have noticed that the shaking hand was about to pass the elbow, drew my attention and asked, don't you know your wife? I got startled while dis-engaging from the lady and asked what's going on here, is this not my wife? I became confused, everything was like a drama. It was then I realized that the lady who clings to me all this while was not my wife but my friend's fiancée. My wife was just aside watching calmly. On recognizing my real wife, I rushed and grabbed her kissing her passionately. My wife and my friend's fiancée never knew before. While I was confused and thought it was an arranged episode, my wife on her own part was equally confused as she thought I was not the one she came for or I may have changed my mind. In life nothing good comes so easy. After the airport drama, I never knew a bigger shocker awaits me.

The traditional marriage and church wedding were fixed the same day due to time constraints. On the wedding day, I was on my way when I received a call from my wife; she was hysteric and sobbing in the phone. She told me that the priest has cancelled the wedding. "It is the deity that people worship that kills them". I wondered how the priest should spoil our day. I resolved within me that there is no going back, if the priest for any reason decide not to wed us, we could go on with the traditional marriage and have the church wedding another time and place. According to the priest, the reason for cancelling the wedding was because people living abroad marry to whites over there and still come home to marry another. Therefore since he was not sure whether I fall in that category, he has to postpone the wedding. Since I knew I was free of such commitment, I left him to absolve his mind from all doubts while the traditional marriage was done. Marriage is like a package, you never know the contents until you open it. Despite the initial doubts and fears on the circumstances we met each other, since after

our marriage, we have found our missing ribs in each other. She is exactly what I wanted. Someone respectful to her husband and a good companion.

“The female toad said that husband is so sweet that when she got married, she carried her husband permanently on the back”. My wife can affirm to that. Our marriage has been successful and we have been blessed with a child. With experience from my wife, my mother, my elder sister (Sara) I am passionate about women and the family system. The unique role women play in establishing the home. The reality of a home is the woman. The stress, troubles that women go through to maintain their marriage and home is highly commendable. I appreciate the diligence of women.

CHAPTER 2: CURRENT EXPERIENCES IN EUROPE

LEAVING HOMELAND: This chapter dwells on my current experiences in Europe and what prompted me to leave my home land to live abroad. How those objectives have been met or not. Many factors compel many people to leave homeland. To some it may be because of war, insecurity, persecution, violence poverty or for socio-economic reasons... In my own case, I should say it was by choice and for reasons of personal convenience and not out of absolute necessity considering my status at the time I left. In my life I have always longed to break away from the jinx of generational and situational poverty. There is what is known as generational and situational poverty. The two are not the same. Though in my own case, I have to contend more against the later. Generational poverty according to Ruby K. Payne, PhD, is being in poverty for two generations. While situational poverty is a shorter time and is caused by circumstance e.g. deaths, illness, divorce, war, etc. Not excluding ignorance and lack of education.

Passion and significance for success compelled me to leave homeland. And it was also the same passion that led some great men and women, including the founding fathers of America, to sacrifice their families, friends, and home land to another country. My aim has always been to lift my family across the poverty line to the other side of the economic class. And to end the situational poverty circle for my children. As it is the wish of every good parents for their children to be better than they were. Also I left home to satisfy my curiosity to know more about the world outside me. I was motivated by the desire to acquire the Golden Fleece and the greener pasture I was brainwashed to believe that Europe and America offered. And to acquaint myself of the stories I heard about the white man’s myth. While in school, I learnt about slave trade, how the black man (Negroes) were taken as slaves to work at farms in Europe and the new world, (America). I also learned that after massive slavery of the Black man, the white imperialists from

Europe and America colonized the African continent. As an inquisitive sort, I wanted to know about the perceived superiority of the white race over the black race. While Africa is on the receiving end. To acquaint myself the basis of the white man's concept that the black man is savage and servile. The honor, privilege and respect accorded to the been to's at home. To know more about the fantastic stories and impressions given about Europe and America as a paradise on earth by those who has been there. These and more motivated me to take a leave from home land and make an adventure to abroad and to the white man's land.

"What you think about the most or focus on the most is what will appear as your life". Also if you need something go close to the source. For me coming to Europe was not a dream but a vision. I don't believe much in dreams but in vision, as dreams are cloudy and sometimes vanish. But vision remains and keeps you focused and is a path finder. Therefore after my college education, when I started working and living on my own, my interest and attention always inclined to foreign information. News about Europe and America always caught my attention. I sought for employment in multi- national companies and interacted with the expatriate staff. The first two attempts made to travel failed and I lost my resources, but I never lost my vision or relent. Purpose always set a course after determining the end and encourages the traveler along the way.

Between 2000 and 2001, my Architectural and contract services have started thriving very well as I have started handling contracts like dredging projects worth millions of Naira. I realized a reasonable amount of money in my contract projects and made some investments at home. At this time I thought that the right time has come for me to realize my vision and I set out for it. I kept my plans to myself and never shared it with my family members. The idea was that if it doesn't work, no one would know, and no one would feel sorry for me as I detest being in a sorry situation. I would just continue my normal activity. It is said that life is a shooting range never miss your target. I left Nigeria to Benin republic to process my visa to Europe through the assistance of my cousin living there. Ask, and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened... Mathew 7, 7. With that biblical injunction in mind, I asked, sought and knocked at the door of the Dutch embassy and the door of Europe was opened for me. I was given Visa to Germany. I never returned home again to bid farewell to my parents and family. A day to my departure I informed my elder sister (Sarah) on phone that I would be leaving to Germany. She was surprised, though happy but she scolded me for taking everyone unawares. Life is an adventure, and from there I took a leap into the unknown.

GERMANY: I arrived Germany on September 2001. It was at the thick of winter period. As I landed at the airport, the reality of leaving home and a familiar environment to a strange land, people, language and culture dawned on me. Everywhere were full of white faces and pointed noses. It reminded me the story I was told about two kinsmen, Mba and Abel who went for a painting job interview during the colonial era. Mba was taken while Abel was rejected because he was carried away by the English man's pointed nose rather than concentrating on the purpose of the interview. The English man asked Mba his experience on painting. Mba described and demonstrated how they used clay mixed in water to paint their mud houses. While he was trying to prove his experience, Abel was drawing his attention to the English man's pointed nose. The English man noticed that Abel was not serious on what he came for, and said to him, Abel, that which you are looking for you will not get it.

Therefore, I did not allow myself to be scared of the faces and pointed noses I saw as to avoid not achieving my goal. In Nigeria there is the white community and I interacted and worked with them, but I have never been in the midst of white multitude like this before. Though I was with my cousin, but I seem to be the odd man out as my cousin was like a mulato, (fair skinned) or what Nigerians call 'unfortunate European' and eyes kept following me wherever I went. I said to myself be a man, despite their colors they are human beings and no man is foreign to me. We passed through the immigration protocols and took a train to Disburg to meet my cousin's friend Obi, who came to receive us. Life is too short and death is painful especially at a young age. Obi who received me in Germany died in last December. May his soul rest in the Lord.

While on the train to Dasburg, my thoughts went back to Nigeria. I remembered the last time I had a train ride. That was in the 70's during my college days when we used to travel from school to some cities on the locomotive train with cheap fares. And it was very useful to the rural dwellers for transporting food items to the cities. But today rail transport has been abandoned for years in Nigeria and is no longer functioning due to bad governance. My first train ride on arrival to Germany gave me idea of what a good train transport system should be like. The stations had electronic ticket machines and inside the train were very neat with comfortable seats for passengers and televisions mounted on each coach. As we came down from the train at the station and walked towards Obi's house which was just a stone throw, I saw very fine and modern auto buses stopped at the bus stops with people entering decently without rush or dragging. And to my surprise the drivers were neatly dressed on their suite and ties. I wondered could this be

real as that was a sharp contrast from the Lagos bus stops, passengers and bus drivers.

A typical Lagos molue bus hardly stops for passengers. On bus stops it slows down only for passengers to jump out and jump in while the conductor shouts himself hoax announcing routes and destinations. It used to be survival of the fittest to board a bus in Lagos. As we walked along, I noticed the buildings within built lifts, though not with fantastic architectural aesthetics but uniformly patterned and orderly spaced with beautiful flower lawns, and land scrapings. The road network was very good with visible vertical and horizontal road signs, and traffic lights, neat walk ways and bicycle lanes. I saw people kissing openly on the road and in public places something unusual to me, but normal in this part of the world as I later realized. Men and women strolling along with dogs clothed and giving very tender care and attention to the dogs.

With what I observed in a short while from the journey from the airport to Obi's place, made me realize that I was in a new and different environment and a world far from home. I noticed a sense of orderliness, discipline and a kind of organized system. Compared to Lagos as Nigeria's biggest city and the first port of call to most visitors and foreigners coming to Nigeria. Lagos life is far from normalcy. It is said that every other city in Nigeria has a "Welcome sign". Except Lagos, because going to live in Lagos and leaving Lagos are choices and Lagos life is a choice. I told myself, from now on it's no more Lagos or Nigeria life, rather the German life. There was constant light everywhere both night and day. I never witnessed light failure during my stay in Obi's house. An usual experience compared to Lagos and other cities back home in Nigeria where no day passes without light failure and noise pollution caused by the sound of electric generators as alternative source of power supply by households. Having observed good roads and efficient transport system, constant electricity, adequate communication, clean environment, in addition to these was a functional health system as I later realized. With the availability of these basic amenities of living, I reasoned that Germany is a place worth living.

CULTURE SHOCKS: Among the culture shocks had during my first few days on arriving Germany include.

ATTACHMENT TO DOGS: I was surprised to see how closely attached the whites are to dogs as pets. Almost everyone has a dog. And the care, love and attention given to the dogs even surpass that given to some foreigners. I saw all kinds of dog; some well dressed on winter clothes. And the owners feel so happy when they realize you like their dogs. They would tell you the history of the dog even to

the second generation. I later learnt that most emergency ambulances that blow their alarm to warn other road users may be on special service conveying a wounded dog to clinic. Also how friends and neighbors make condolence calls and visits when someone dog died. This was a sharp contrast in my country where majority of people care little or not for dogs and pets.

PUBLIC ROMANCE: I was shocked to see people kissing and expressing their affections to each other openly on the road train, bus and public places without any shame or reservation especially among the young ones who would be glued to each other for minutes kissing. Back in Nigeria, this was not the practice, even in the cities.

THE DIETS: The sandwiches, salads and other kinds of foods were very strange to me. There was roulade, and wienersnitzel (a type of pounded and breaded pork) and Spaetzle, (noodles served with gravy). The foods were indeed different and could pass as fast foods back home.

UNFOLDING REALITIES. Life abroad is like a secret cult, you never know what is inside until you are initiated. Nobody would tell you the true and real life situation abroad. It's only the rosy, beautiful and fanciful appealing side of the coin that is always dangled to most intending comers. The ugly, difficult and bad side of the coin would no one tell you. However even if one is told the reality, he would hardly belief. So I think is better experienced than told. I stayed two days in my cousin friend's house and was asked to live. My thought while in Nigeria was that once I enter Europe with visa that guarantees my stay as I may always renew my visa whenever it expires and find work. My cousin who came with me did not come to stay. He introduced me to Obi and told me that he would assist me and left to Spain. His friend asked me on the first day if I came to stay or I would be going back soon. On knowing that I have come to stay, he told me that I must take asylum which entail declaring or applying for a refugee status. He suggested I could claim to come from any country in Africa where there is war, like Liberia or Cote de Voile. But that seemed strange and a shock to me. I told him I came here to work and not as a refugee. He laughed and told me that this is Germany and if I really meant to stay, I must take a refugee status first and look for a woman who would marry me to give me a resident status.

"Who will no better the evils of witch craft than the woman who lost a child to evil spirits"? My cousin's friend, having passed through the same process knew the system better. But bizarre thoughts came into my mind considering the two options facing me. Becoming a refugee and a woman marrying me, and not me marrying a woman were puzzles and hard nuts for me to crack. My thoughts went

to the refugee camps I experienced during the Biafra war. It's not what experiencing twice in a life's time. I remembered the stories about Hitler and the Nazi's concentration camps. Since its Germany, how would I know it's not one of such camps I would be taken to? Also I have always held marriage in high esteem and have always wished to marry a woman I love and who loves me also, and together we make a happy home and family also. Not marrying a woman based on what she would offer me or marriage of convenience. I remembered that my people used to say that "A goat that dies in a barn was not killed by hunger". I therefore resolved that if it's going to be, it's up to me and my God.

Since I was not compelled by anybody to embark on this journey, I would rather face squarely whatever challenge that may come my way and with Faith in my God, I would scale through the hurdles. Therefore seeing that there was no way the asylum cup could pass over me except I drink it, I settled for that. However, I felt that the unfolding realities were far from what I expected or the impression of Europe I had in mind before leaving home. I had the impression that Europe is a place full of jobs and business. A place you could enter and start work and start making money immediately. From the reality on ground, I reasoned how were most compatriots who came home with success stories from abroad able to make it within a short interval of time after they travelled. Most people after 3 – 6 months abroad usually send money, cars, build houses and accomplish things they were not capable to achieve before leaving home. Where are the money growing trees people pluck in abroad I asked myself? "Behind every sudden wealth there is a crime" (unknown)

TAKING ASYLUM: I was shown the direction to a police station and I went and handed over myself to the police. I was shivering with cold as I entered their office. I guessed from their gesture and sign they asked me what I wanted. I told them I came new and had no place to stay. They said "ausweis bitte" which means document please. I told them I have no document and that warranted more questions like where are you from, how did you come here, who brought you here, do you speak Dutch and so on, and I felt I needed a gargantuan mouth (Shakespeare) to answer all these questions thrown to me at the same time. I was thoroughly searched and my clothes and shoes were removed. I was taken inside a room that served as a cell with a bed and water cistern (WC) inside. The door had a pigeon hole.

And I was like a caged bird. From time to time someone would come and peep through the pigeon hole to check on me. I was served coffee which my body really needed because of the cold. They later brought a paper stating that I was been

detained as an illegal immigrant without any document for my identification and stated that I have the right to request for a lawyer. I was later interrogated by a lady lawyer who seemed to be polite and friendly; however I was very careful not to let out information that would be detrimental to my plight knowing that the politeness may have been a disguised strategy to draw me out from my shell.

After the interview I was discharged and given a fare ticket for transport and covering note from the police to the refugee camp located far away. I arrived at the camp late after much difficulty in locating the place as I dropped at a wrong bus stop before the camp due to language barrier. And I had to trek long distance under the rain and cold and arrived the camp almost frozen by the winter cold. The security turned me back stating that it was late to admit anybody since there was no sleeping space available and they have already served dinner for the inmates. But I insisted, by letting him know that I don't know or have anywhere else I could go from there. He was touched and let me inside to sleep in the dining hall with a blanket he provided for me. I have never been exposed to or felt cold like that in my life before. I have been bitten by the African sun, I have been scotched by my region's tropical weather, and now I am been chilled and frozen by the European cold and Germany's winter. When these climates may have had their tolls on me, my body and soul would emerge weather proof.

The camp was located on anchored ship, and served as a transitory dormitory for circumstantial refugees like myself. The asylum process was like a military service. No place to call your home. You could be moved and transferred to a new location at anytime. After few days in the ship, I was taken to the real refugee camp at Oldenburg. That was where the real asylum journey started. This was where one is interviewed thoroughly and you state why you left your home land to Germany. Your fate to remain for a short while or for a long duration in Dutch land would be decided from there. On arrival to Oldenburg, I was surprised to see people from all parts of the world as refugees in that camp. Including Russia, Poland, Romania, Ecuador, Peru and all parts of the globe were there. Oldenburg is like what I call a vast plantation of humanity. To those who think that poverty, suffering and crisis are peculiar to one race and that Africa is the weeping child, from my Oldenburg's vast plantation experience, you are proved contrary. These problems are like cancer virus which has infected our world and a plague which humanity irrespective of color and race must wrestle with because in Oldenburg "the rich also cry".

My stay in the refugee camp was like going back to the boarding house of my college days. There was a stipulated time for everything. Time for refectory, labor,

games and sleep. One could not go outside without obtaining authorized permission from the house master. We interacted and made friends among the people of various nations. We ate from one pot. Black and white, Christians and Muslims under one roof. I saw humanity as one, one world, one God one destiny. I could see that man is humble when he is in difficulty. Each inmate looked forward to the interview day; it's like a D-day to everyone in the camp. Your mind could not be at rest until you have done the interview. You may take days and weeks to prepare and rehearse your story for the interview. It used to be a frenzied moment. It's beyond preparing for the final year college certificate or final year university degree thesis and defense. It's a day you tell the story of your life under camera and tape recorder. A day you must present convincing reasons and evidences why you left your home land and must proof beyond reasonable doubt that you deserve a refuge in Deutschland.

In journalism, it is said that good news is that which is bad. For example, dog bites man is no news, but man bites dog is good news. Likewise all stories meant for refugee status must bear that journalistic essence. You did not come for picnic, and the interviewers don't have the ear for romantic stories. They want to hear hard news, disasters, tragedy, catastrophe, genocide, war, hailstorm, strange and life threatening dangers after your life. No matter how phony it may be behind the scene, if it was cooked to be like a palatable dish, it would be eaten. However pathetic and acceptable your story may be, it's just for a while, and your status must be reviewed after time. I presented what was acclaimed to meet the score mark, but as nothing remains the same for a refugee it was bound to crumble sooner or later. While in the refugee camp, I became very popular among my colleagues for composing and developing stories for others. They would always refer new comers to me whom I usually listen to their briefs and develop a story for them to present. In return, I never lacked beer, though not allowed in the camp, but it was always smuggled inside. And I usually don't pay for bus tickets when going outside as those whom I helped usually buy ticket for me whenever I had need to go to the city.

There were some funny experiences during my stay in the asylum camp. It is usually said that fun things are even more fun when shared with others. The first time I went for a medical checkup after arriving the Oldenburg camp. The doctor asked me to lie on the bed facing up; he touched my tummy and said baby, baby, exercise, exercise. I wondered what he meant. I guessed that as my tummy was big, he may have seen double and may have mistaken me as carrying a baby. And I reasoned that since this is a new world to me, it could be that men perhaps get pregnant in this part of the world. To avoid any further incidence of possible

rushing me to the theater for a caesarian operation, I responded by telling the doctor, beer, beer, and he further said exercise, exercise and smiled. Actually when I arrived Germany initially I had a pot belly which was a result of beer taken in Nigeria in those happy days. "The higher the hurdle, the greater the glory of defeating it" (Moliere). Going through the asylum process was not easy. After spending about three months at the refugee camp in Oldenburg, I was transferred to a village called Eggermulein at the outskirts of Beersenbruck which was under Osnabruck as my landkreis (state)

I would never forget my stay in Eggermuhlein which was a village. I had a fine flat to share with two other colleagues. The village had very fine and beautiful environment with new buildings, beautiful premises, flowers and land scrapings. And there were fields and recreation parks. I wondered how that could be a village compared to my native village. What is considered as a village in Germany and in Europe was like a GRA (government reserved area) in Nigeria. The GRA's in Nigeria is abode of the big wigs in the society, politicians, high class entrepreneurs, and men of timber and caliber and for the affluent. It had a mark of class distinction. I wished I could transform my Ogele village to be like this same village where all essential amenities for living seem to be in place. While my flat mates considered the village remote and preferred to stay with their brothers and friends in the city, I remained in the village and did social work.

The villagers were friendly and nice to me. I had many friends in Eggermuhlein. Both old and young. Among them is Dr. Karl and family, a medical practitioner who became friendly to me as I was the first black patient that came to his clinic. Rakim Hiltz , the young man who had no other agenda for us except discotheques and music concerts around the city. Also Udo and Klaus, who would drive long distances to come and have Bible studies with me, which gave me a measure of spiritual fortress during that stage of my life. Gaining acceptance as an asylum seeker or immigrant may not be that easy. According to Amnesty International report, "As the number of people seeking protection has increased, so too has the reluctance of states to provide that protection". So after about a year in Germany, my attempt to seek for admission to reside in that country failed, and I was asked to leave the country. Despite the Governments tough policies on immigrants, from my own experience, individually the Germans are very warm, friendly and welcoming to foreigners and immigrants in their midst.

SPAIN: "When the going becomes tough, the tough gets going" Robert Schuler. The life of an immigrant is faced with severe hardships and uncertainties. And it's hard to find a stable and permanent refuge outside home. After my asylum status

crumbled in Germany, I came over to Spain. Before coming to Spain, I was in a cross-road. I thought about going back to my country and start all over again instead of wasting away the time of my life in Europe without engaging in something meaningful. I considered my University education, which I abandoned in my final year to come abroad, my thriving business and clients built after years of hard work and diligence. I thought about my family, friends, home, the long separation, my abandoned projects and my marriage that would be delayed because of leaving home. Despair may enter our lives when the vision of goal and the reality of daily life do not match.

The moment I stepped out, others stepped in to occupy my space. How would I regain the positions and time and resources so far lost for coming to seek a better life abroad which seem to be a mirage? So many thoughts ran through my mind. I thought about the future, and the virtues of patience, determination, faith and perseverance. I remembered that the future is greater than the past, that those who stand and brood over their past cannot make a head way in life. I remembered that winners don't quit and quitters never win. I remembered that "tough times never last but tough people do".-Robert Schuler. Above all, I remembered my Bible that it said that to him that believe, everything is possible. And that the earth and all that dwell in it belong to God. Armed with all these heart up lifting thoughts from myself, men and God. Like a weary pilgrim, I encouraged myself to move on to Spain to claim and obtain that which the future holds for me. If your mind jumps over the hurdle your body cannot say no. (Benson Idahosa)

After two years in Spain I obtained my residence and work permit. It was that day I could say I arrived Europe. Life in Europe is a regulated system. Until you are admitted into the system, you cannot do anything meaningful. Everything hinges on document. And I have been residing and working in Spain since then. Though the Spanish immigration law may seem to be more favorable and easier to immigrants in Spain, compared to other European states, however the Spanish are individually discriminatory to foreigners especially to Africans in particular. They isolate and make you feel unwelcome. That is a sharp contrast compared to the elaborate greetings and hospitality attitude of Nigerians to foreigners in their midst. To the Spanish, there is that underlying feelings of nameless apprehension at the invasion of foreigners to their country. They exhibit that at work, train and public places. It's worse when you don't understand the language. A Spanish colleague at work once told me. We don't like foreigners, we only pretend to. I have been a victim of their discrimination several times. One occasion was when I did two jobs. From one I would go to another. After work I changed and put on my

suit and tie wearing a corporate look. My boss noticed me and asked me if I was travelling, I replied that I was going to work. That seemed like a big surprise to him, and he immediately retorted, 'Como asi en este pais'. Meaning, like this in this country? A day after, I was fired for no justifiable reason. The reason without any doubt was that as an African I was not supposed to do a corporate job or appear elegant. "If somebody hates you there is something in you he covets", (unknown). The job I did required speaking English as a priority and I had an edge over my Spanish colleagues on that.

After that incidence, I devised a strategy, to always look for employment in companies that requires bi-lingual personnel's. With that, I exploit their lack of knowledge of English to my own advantage. In that case they would not look down on you much. But would look up to you for assistance. And it has worked well for me. Experience has shown me that living as an immigrant in Spain and Europe generally is not a bed of roses. You face severe employment restrictions, or under employment, discrimination and ridicules. Many immigrants leave their home countries to look for a better life in other countries not from choice, or reasons of personal convenience but out of absolute necessity. For that reason many endure untold hardships. "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home", John Howard Payne.

CHAPTER 3: PROSPECTIVE EXPERIENCE; A BALANCE BETWEEN THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

MISCONCEPTIONS: AS mentioned in the introductory paragraphs and preceding chapters, one of the purposes of this paper is to acquaint myself on the myth about the white race. The perceived superiority and inferiority complex between the white and black races which was one of the reasons for leaving my homeland. It is said that experience is the best teacher. Having been privileged to taste the two worlds I feel bold to make these remarks.

To the Europeans the African or black man is considered as savage and servile. He is seen as inferior to his white counterpart. But in my own view and observation, this is a misnomer and a misconception. The white man is by no means superior to his black counterpart if put on the same playing field. This has been proved in so many facets of life. In politics by the Mandela's, in sports, the Tysons, Serena Williams and the Peles. In literature, the Wole Soyinka's, Chinua Achebe's. In music, the Bob Marley's, and the Michael Jackson's. In science, the Philip Egweani's and the Chike Obi's to mention but a few. The Africans s virtue of a good spirit of hospitality to strangers was initially misconstrued as weakness and

was cashed in by the scheming and subtle Europeans to invade the black man's land to plunder and exploit his human and mineral resources to his own benefit.

The Africans were blind and ignorant of the western imperialism device from the beginning and left their doors wide open to let them in. The 19th century colonization of Africa through white missionaries and monopoly mercantile companies was an extension of the white's exploitation of the African continent. Slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism and the present day globalization were all exploitative mechanisms devised by the Westerns to suck the milk of Africa. According to Emeka Ojukwu, It suited them to transport and transplant millions of the flowers of our manhood for the purpose of exploring the Americas and western Indies. When it became no longer profitable to them to continue with depopulation and uncontrolled spoliation of Negro Africa, their need of the moment became to exploit the natural resources of the continent... They install and support puppet rulers as presidents to create the impression of political independence, while retaining the control of the economy behind the scene. In spite of their orchestrated open pronouncement to the contrary, the white peoples of the world especially the Europeans are still far from accepting that what is good for them can also be good for black Africans.

The days they will concede to this recognition, those days will the dream of one world be realized. Because the black man is considered inferior and servile to the white man, therefore I could not wear suite to work. And must accept all dehumanizing conditions, job restrictions, underemployment I am offered and subjected to in Spain. While in the contrary in Africa and in Nigeria, even the least qualified white man does a plump job, he is chauffeur driven and occupied strategic job position. That is the road our ancestors went. That is the road we met. That is the road we have been. And this is the road we cannot continue. I call on Africans and fellow blacks to awaken from slumber and face the realities of your situation. Nobody will do it for you better than you ought to. We have all it takes to greatness but we have been ignorant and blind to use our resources and talents to recreate our own world. We Africans, we have to learn how to live our lives without scripts. Not to stand as onlookers and watch others crack our kernels for us. We should not allow our limitations to limit us. Even when we know there are many of them, but in the midst of those limitations are equally huge opportunities unnoticed. We can make it if we really want.

ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS: "No body can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." Marie Robinson. Regardless of the success or failures of the past we should not remain passive. Because according to, Winston Churchill, "success is not final, failure is not fatal. It

is the courage to continue that counts". As mentioned in the introduction, the road we came is the story of my life. And how this personal experience relates to the struggle by my tribe, nation, continent, and the entire human race to overcome the obstacles that have been encountered on their journey into existence right from the beginning. Irrespective of which level of existence, from individual to state, nation, continent and the entire human race. The road we came has been littered with so many hardships, struggles difficulties and challenges.

For me as an individual, the battle to overcome imposing hardships, poverty and obstacles to become a person. For my tribe and region, a war against genocide and for survival. For Nigeria a war against disintegration. For the black race, the struggle for emancipation and against western imperialism. For the human race, the scourge of discrimination and racism. In the midst of all these intermingling nexus, has arisen some key research questions which this thesis is set out to proffer some answers such as; why are nature's resources not evenly distributed? How do some people become successful and wealthier than others? Even countries, why are some nations happier and more contented than others? And why should one leave his home land to another? From the knowledge and experience acquired through my life journey and experiential learning, I am inclined to tow the following line of thought and reasoning.

We cannot blame nature for partiality because nature has distributed its resources accordingly. Though it may not be equally distributed but varies according to people and location. However, there is no individual or country that is not endowed with talent or natural resources. But even as individuals, we may not have equal or the same talents, likewise nations. We know that some people have more talents than others and it is also true that everybody has a talent. But the irony is that many have not discovered theirs, and may not even discover it throughout their life time. To what use you put your talent as an individual will determine the result you get. Based on this premise, all people may not deserve equal share of the world's material substance. It is said that "necessity is the mother of invention". Some people use their necessity as a tool for inventions and innovations while others don't. Likewise, countries are endowed with mineral resources, but each country and race, has a deposit of one type of natural resources or another. And many will not discover theirs and develop it, or some will mismanage theirs. Therefore, we cannot blame nature for favoritism.

Looking around among our peer group, have we often wondered why some are so successful and others are not? It may not be how smart they are and it may not be

that one person has a strong desire to succeed and the other does not. Most people want to be successful and most people try hard. It is said, knowledge is power, and having knowledge in the right direction gives you more power and preference. What makes lives, individuals, or countries different, are having useful knowledge and its rightful application. One rightly knew more about his necessities and applied the right means and knowledge to make out something useful out of it. While the other succumbed at the point of need and never forged ahead to tackle his need."The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upwards in the night". Henry Wards worth Longfellow. The problem with most people, individuals and countries is that they settle for a life and condition that is less than what they want. I believe this is one of the underlying differences between the black race and the white race. According to Emeka Ojukwu, the difference between the black man and white man is that if the two are travelling on a journey and encounters a mountain on the their way, to the black man that is the end of the journey, while the white man will climb on top the mountain and cross over to continue his journey.

For people and individuals, we have to think about the resources we have to fight poverty or obstacles that stand on our way to success. This includes finance, emotional resources, determination and dreams. However the ability to leave poverty is more dependent upon other resources than we think is upon financial resources. For instance the emotional strength to withstand difficult and insurmountable obstacles, to cross from poverty line to the other side of economic class is not an easy journey, a lot of battles are fought in the mind, all kinds of thoughts, both positive and negative competing with each other. Thoughts of helplessness and hopelessness. Therefore, one's mental resource, the ability to process information, analyze situations, make choices and take decisions and the spiritual insight to pursue one's purpose in life are valuable tools and resources.

SUMMARY: life is a journey. And the road to attain success and happiness is not easy. For me, it's been a rocky road in search of success and happiness. Likewise the same pursuit applies to my tribe, nation, race and humanity at large. I have weathered through some of the storms and obstacles that were on my road right from birth. I never had an affluent parental background. But what I lacked in affluent parental background I made up for hard work, self determination, intelligence, courage and discipline. The road we came is the story of the life journey of an old friend of mine, that transcends to the experience of others, and humanity at large. And that friend is me. There were many challenges that had to be overcome. Ranging from surviving a gruesome civil war, lack of the basic

amenities of life, poverty and education. Living was by sweat and self determination. But even within the toll of living the everyday life, the African family tie to a fraternity was a stronghold second to none. With the new yam festivals, masquerades, age grades, moon light games and folk stories outlets for social interaction and happiness.

Today, looking back to the beginning, there have been some remarkable changes improvements, and failures on the road we came. In life, you win some, and you lose some. Forty five years ago our source of light used to be the palm oil fueled smoke filled local lamp. Today we switch on lights and electricity illuminates our living quarters. Ponds have been replaced by tap water embedded in our walls and compounds. Letters and communications that used to take months, has become an almost immediate process with the telephone and internet connections. The mud and thatched roof houses have been replaced with block and corrugated zinc houses. At the other hand, the primary and secondary schools we attended are in sorry state today as they have been neglected by the government. The rail system of transport we enjoyed during my college days has collapsed and abandoned. My country Nigeria has not achieved the desired unity and peace it fought for. Forty two years after the civil war, the unity of the country is today being threatened by the same North and her Muslim extremists.

I leapt into the white man's world and moved to Europe. I witnessed firsthand the realities of the black man living in Europe with its winter deep freeze, and culture shocks foreign to me. I witnessed the difference between the Germans and the Spaniards in their attitude to foreigners like me. I met Anita, a wonderful Canadian lady who shattered a lot of my beliefs about the white race. Beyond the shores of Nigeria, racism and discrimination still reigns in the mind of people. The black man is still considered inferior by his white counterpart. Standing on a cross road in my journey, which established conflicts in my heart about leaving home and my disappointments. Within my disappointment, I learned that Europe was not the paradise and promise land I thought of. And the conceived superiority of whites over blacks in fact was a misconception of reality. In spite of the west's orchestrated aid to Africa, they still wish Africa remains a child, dependent on foreign aid and hand-outs.

Man is inferior to his fellow man only if he chooses to be. The world will know no peace until the day man stops trying to dominate and

rule his fellow man. The passage of so many years away from home will never wipe off the memories of my native land. Moreover, in my own view, racism and discrimination is not peculiar to the Spanish, Europeans, or whites. No, it is a

cancer which has eaten deep the entire human race. Its starts from the family, to tribe, nation and race. Among children of one parent, there is a favorite child. Favoritism is a bed fellow to racism. From family and parental favoritism it germinates to tribal discriminations, nationalism, and matures to racism. Therefore it's a human factor, and mankind's problem, and is beyond man's solution. Because from the beginning man was designed to lean on the supernatural being to lead him. Until mankind realize his origin and the road he came and subscribe ruler ship to his maker, then will his mind be absolved from all discrimination and hatred. Until then, our world will not know peace nor become the one world we are craving for. "The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate. Who can know it? (Holy Scripture) Jeremiah 17:9. I believe that it is only the supernatural deity that can tame the heart of man from all wickedness, hatred and racism. And bring peace in the world, which I see as a vast plantation.

THE VAST PLANTATION.

In the beginning of creation were you
So large you are,
Mankind is the crop found in you
Planted of different species by the planter
In different locations and time
Various crops have spring forth from you
Some are white, and some are black
Some are yellow, and some are red

Some though planted
Never grew up to see the day light
Many have stunted growth
Some planted in fertile lands
Produced poor yields
Some found in not quite fertile lands
Produced better yields
The planter sends reapers
To harvest everyday

There is no time crops are lacked in the field
Some are harvested when unripe,
Others ripe, but ignored
Some with greenish leaves
Are at the prime of life
Others have faded leaves
Which soon will be shaded off?
Planting and harvesting will continue in you
Until the planter decides to plant no more.

CONCLUSION: I have always attached a great importance to education and had always wished to learn and excel in life. Though my wife and family have been very supportive to my education, I have seen how hard it is to work and go to school or for one to fend for him in school. Therefore I will always encourage my children to complete their education on time before life's responsibilities creeps in. And my outlook for the future is a good one. With my education and qualification, I feel a great need to practice my profession. I foresee a better life, and a brighter future, where I will make more earnings and will reward my family with vacations at choice places. And award scholarships to children from poor homes in my community. The diversified experiences in my life, exposure, knowledge and education currently obtained have afforded me opportunities that would have been passed by.

Looking back to the past, the road I came was littered with so many obstacles and challenges that needed to be surpassed. But with my determination, hard work, education, self confidence and faith in God, most of those obstacles and challenges have been conquered, while some still remain. However, whatever the situation may be, my resolve is to recreate my own world and leave the world better than I met it. For my tribe, nation, Africa and the black race, my recommendation is; don't brood much over the past. For those who brood over the past do not make headway in life. You have to move on, "for heaven helps those who help themselves", Samuel Smiles Self Help 1859. Neither stands long waiting at the door of disappointment, and fails to see the door of opportunity open. And don't wait until everything is right, because it will never be that perfect. There will always be challenges, barriers, and less than perfect conditions. So you must stand and face your challenges until you succeed. You can make it if you really want. To the rest of the world and humanity, consider the road mankind came and remember that we are children of one father. And let one love reign and keep us together as one.

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