

A stylized map of Africa is the central focus, rendered in a dark, textured brown color. Overlaid on the map is a vibrant sunset scene with a bright sun and silhouettes of trees. A lion's face is superimposed on the right side of the map, looking towards the left. The text 'BEEN THERE' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font across the top left of the map.

BEEN THERE

&

**DONE
THAT**

**A COLLECTION OF SUCCESS STORIES FROM
YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS AND ENTREPRENEURS**



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YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS AND ENTREPRENEURS**

**BEEN there &
DONE THAT**
LTD

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Been There & Done That

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Content

Foreword	iii
Introduction	xi
PART A: ENTERPRENURSHIP	1
Amanda Kirby Okoye	3
Ayodele Okhiria	5
Babatunde Sobola	7
Bunmi Olaniyan	9
Hafeez Adeyemi	11
Martin Chukwuemeka	13
Miriaku Obioha	15
Mo Onemola-Adewunmi	17
Naomi Simon	19
Nnodim Blossom	21
Onyi Anyado	23
Richard Awoyemi	25
Sheun David-Onamusi	27
Tochukwu Onu	29
Tunde Leye	31
Wale Micaiah	33
PART B: LEADERSHIP	35
Ayo Sogunro	37

Ayodeji Akinwowo	39
Ayodeji Osowobi	41
Bamikole Omishore	43
Chukwunonso Ngwu	45
Deinsam Ogan	47
Demola Olanrewaju	49
Jibril Shehu	51
Joshua Obichebendu	53
JJ Omojuwa	55
Kelechi Anyikude	57
Nana Aisha Salaudeen	59
Obie Opara	61
Olawale Awoyinka	63
Oluwadara Atewologun	65
Oluwatosin Nubi	67
Opeyemi Soile	69
Oyin Talabi	71
Pamela Osanakpo	73
Solomon Oluwaseun Oyeniran	75
Yadoma Bukar Mandara	77
Yinka Afolabi	79
Yinka Akomolafe	81
Yinka Alli-Balogun	83



Foreword

Horrid stories are routinely reported of a few Nigerians who do not exhibit the inherent Nigerian values. For a country of about 178 million people with a presence in almost every nation of the earth, the stories of resilience, discipline, determination, faith and entrepreneurship are drowned in the media's telling of the Nigerian story. We have transferred the power of telling to others. This book takes that power back, and congregates a few stories that show you a glimpse into the heart of the true Nigeria and Nigerian.

This book represents our telling for it is often said, that if you don't tell your story, someone else will tell it. More often than not, the tale told by someone else might respond to a different purpose than yours. This is why a book that is an enthusiastic celebration of successful young Nigerians and British Nigerians is important for me to identify with.

As a people we should understand the power of the tale. When you tell your own tale and write your own story, you can use it to empower, define and inspire yourself and your people. This is what this book is about. The author's intention with this book is to empower, educate, inspire and motivate young leaders and entrepreneurs from across the world. On the pages of this book, you will find a selection of success stories of over 40 prominent and outstanding young Nigerians based in Nigeria, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Although these represent only a small sample of successful young Nigerians and British-Nigerians, these stories will inspire and motivate the next generation of African leaders and entrepreneurs. For the Nigerian Diaspora, this book presents success stories that are bound to change perception and confront the reader with the value of the true

Nigerian spirit. I commend the publishers and authors for the book.

It is indeed a great time for our nation, and our people at home and abroad can be assured that the rebirth of the nation is in progress under the inspired, bold and honest leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, SAN. The 86-paged book is full of significant hints and tips for young people in their quest for personal and professional development, especially in the area of leadership and entrepreneurship. I am certain you will find these stories galvanizing.

Sincerely,

Laolu Akande,

Senior Special Assistant (Media and Publicity)

The Presidency, Aso Rock Nigeria



Profile of founder

Dr. Dipo Awojide

Dr. Awojide obtained a BSc Accounting from the University of Abuja, Nigeria. He obtained an MSc in International Business with Distinction from Coventry University, UK. He subsequently obtained a PhD in Strategic Management from Loughborough University, UK. He has worked in the Banking and Financial Services Sector and as a Researcher in the Human Resources Department at Brush Electrical Machines Ltd.

In 2012, Dr. Awojide founded and was the President of the Nigerian Society at Loughborough University. He was nominated for and awarded the Best Nigerian (UK-Based) Student President in the Nigerian UK-Based Achievers Award 2013.

Dr. Awojide is currently a Lecturer in Strategy at Nottingham Business School. He is a member of the British Academy of Management and the Africa Academy of Management.

He founded BeenThere & DoneThat Ltd in 2015, and currently serves as the President and Head of Strategy.

*Dipo Awojide,
Founder
Been There & Done That Ltd.*

PART A:
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Amanda Kirby Okoye

I had always been a natural entrepreneur and so setting up Joliba Africa was a natural progression from a passion to business. The idea of Jobila Africa as a business was conceived because I realised there was a need to educate, empower and create a positive awareness of our history and culture to Nigerians and the world at large. Consequently, though a passion turned business, the Joliba Africa experience has been amazing.

Joliba Africa takes a retrospective look at our history through pictures, films and artefacts. It is my way of tapping into the positives of visual learning. Visual literacy is the ability to interpret and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image. Using visual aids to share knowledge, our aim is to help enable people engage in several multi-sensory activities via objects, videos and pictures.

Knowledge is the basic building block for a successful life. But then, I noticed some time back that whenever I shared visual information on social media, I would get people from a demography that didn't know anything about some of the images I had posted. I then realised that many of our youths have grown up without knowing, for example, that Ms Zulu Sofola was the first published female Nigerian playwright and dramatist, or whom Bode Thomas was beyond having a popular street in Lagos named in his honour.

If we, especially youths, don't know our past, who we are, or what those before us have done, how will we come to love our nation, refute her enemies or lead her selflessly? I chose this method to impact on the youths because of my belief that images express ideas better than words. Learning history through images is so much more interesting!

We, at Jobila Africa do not claim to be the solution to the problems in our nation, but this project as well as other on-going projects and initiatives of ours can make a big difference in the next few years.



Ayodele Okhiria

I came to Cardiff a few years ago from Nigeria for further education. During the course of my study, I got to interact with a lot of people (especially Nigerians) through educational and social gatherings. From these interactions, I noticed a void and, by thinking outside the box, I saw a business opportunity.

These days most individuals are not ready to take risks. They would rather go for the safe option. The most successful people in the world are those who were prepared to, and indeed took risks! Each time they fell, rose again and continued. What this simply means is that success doesn't come easy and more often than not one will fall, but the ability to rise and continue to strive is what eventually leads to success.

Realizing this opportunity, I set about doing research such as gathering (collecting opinions, insight and ideas) of what the prospective target market needed or expected and how best to deliver. I slowly built up a customer base and also looked at the logistics involved - promotion, advertising and publicity. Social networking sites were of great advantage in terms of creating awareness. Like every other business, successful or otherwise, starting out was tough despite putting in huge investment and a great deal of effort. I even made a loss initially, but I did not let that deter me. I believed I had a good thing going and it was only a matter of time before it started to pay off. There were many obstacles along the way ranging from financial incapability and losses, insufficient logistics, to negativity, and disbelief. But then, I kept my faith alive. With hard work and determination, I began to reap the dividends and in no time little effort was required to keep it going. This gave me the opportunity to focus on other activities and initiatives.

There is a saying, “He who knows how will always have a job, and he who knows why will always be the boss”. Being an entrepreneur is not rocket science; one just has to think outside of the box. There is money to be made out there; one just has to identify an opportunity, either by being smart or thinking outside the box. Also, one must be ready to take risks and put in effort to work; once this is done, the sky is not the limit but the beginning.



Babatunde Sobola

Growing up, I didn't have as much toys as the other children I played with. Yet, by 11 years of age, I was keen to make my own toys. I loved cars and always wanted to make a toy model. Over time, I saved up some of my pocket money to build my armature toys. Also, I started a small animal farm with a few chicken and rabbits right next to our house. This became my extra-curricular passion for many years. It was the start of my entrepreneurial journey.

When I got to the UK, my academic decisions were influenced by my interest in being creative. At University I studied Mechanical Engineering with a placement year, followed by a master's degree in Engineering Design. It was during my placement year that I first earned a full time salary. Looking back, I am very grateful for the inspiration to use the money to start a cleaning company that year. Today, it has now grown into a steady company with the prospect of growing even bigger in years to come.

Starting the business forced me to have a daily schedule different from that of my friends. For instance, I had to go to bed late because of the cleaning jobs I had scheduled for the evening after my placement job was over for the day. My weekends were also taken up for similar reasons. I spent most of my income on equipment, fuel, and other overheads in order to keep the company afloat. The experience was awkwardly exciting as I was eager to see how things will turn out. And, I was equally intent on earning a profit just so that my efforts wouldn't amount to nothing. Looking back, if the business hadn't picked up, I would still have learnt a great deal especially in the areas of dealing with people and project management.

Now that the business is growing, I'm confronted by newer challenges such as managing human resources, cash flow, retaining existing customers and quality control. This has forced me to invest in my personal development. The most important part of the business is that I let God guide all my decisions as the idea came from Him in the first place. The future promises limitless opportunities.



Bunmi Olaniyan

To be honest I don't quite consider myself to be a leader. What I offer are my moral convictions and a sense of outrage and frustration, which spur me into action on any issue, campaign or initiative I embark upon.

As for engaging in entrepreneurial activities, allow me to be a bit cliché and say it probably boils down to my parents. At the risk of sounding boastful, my dad is a very successful entrepreneur and my mother a natural and consummate business-woman. I have now given up trying to replicating my mother's achievements at my age or level of social and corporate/business influence. Now, I'm just going at my pace.

I will stick to the nucleus of what every youth or young entrepreneur should have: Conviction. When you have firm convictions you are comforted and emboldened to stay true to any path you have chosen to champion no matter the level of discontent, opposition that come your way.

Another piece of advice attached to that is moral fortitude. As the religious books enjoin: "let your yes be yes and your no be no". This is a trait I got from my parents, and one shared amongst my siblings as well. Moral fortitude is a priced attribute every leader must possess. My parents have never been caught out in any form of moral malfeasance and that has been the same for me. You might succeed by cutting corners but such "successes" never last.

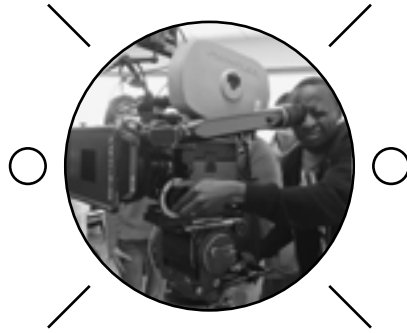
I see myself as a daydreamer, someone who puts the mind to work virtually all the time. Everyday I wake up and conceptualize dozens of ideas out of which I select one to actual-

ize For instance, whenever I see a successful process, I try to imagine how I can improve on it. Equally, whenever I see a failure, I mentally deconstruct the process and imagine how I could have done things better. Most importantly, I “ENQUIRE, EXPLORE, ASK QUESTIONS, BRAVELY VENTURE OUT”. What’s the worst that can happen?

There is hardly any good entrepreneurial idea or business model that something better would not trump at some point, and there is rarely any bad entrepreneurial idea or business model without one or two important lessons that could be used later.

I hope that in the future, I could berth and actualise all the visions inside me and become a successful entrepreneur and a moral compass. But then, I also wish to add value to my generation.

Presently, I work as a software developer and analyst. I also have two small and medium scale businesses in Nigeria that are doing quite well. I have plans to turn several passions into a business and start an online magazine that would reflect my passion for journalism, politics, writing and social welfare. Ultimately, I hope to save up enough money and move back to Nigeria be a successful entrepreneur and dedicate the rest of my time and resources to charity with focus on disadvantaged children and youths.



Hafeez Adeyemi

I had my first bachelor's degree in Nigeria and it was quite challenging. I had to start all over at London Southbank University in the United Kingdom. I have always been enthusiastic about how things are done differently in other countries, particularly in relation to film making which is my area of interest. Basically, my motive for studying Digital Film and Video abroad was hinged on the fact that films are made differently in the developed countries. I also felt that would boost my image in the Nigerian entertainment world.

Studying at London Southbank University was lonely but quite interesting. However, I met with Nigerians outside the school and few people I could relate with inside the class, which gave me a bit of comfort. Similarly, I was lucky to have met some people in the UK who helped me understand the workings of the UK music industry.

As a film student who was interested in the practical aspect of film making, I had to complete more rigorous academic work than when I was in Nigeria and also write assignments in my own words. Another challenge I faced was teamwork during the production stages where we were split into groups. I wasn't yet comfortable with the other students and it felt weird.

Notwithstanding those initial issues, I was able to adapt quickly, focusing on the style of each lecturer and studying hard when necessary. I didn't have any social life except going to cinemas alone until I got comfortable to do so with few friends in class. The whole experience was worth it in the end as I was able to graduate successfully.

After graduation, I moved back to Nigeria where I started my small company in video productions. With the company, I was able to explore what I had learned abroad. I felt the need to impart the little knowledge I had acquired to the people I worked with. I believed that should be the purpose of a young Nigerian who had travelled outside the country to learn how things are done differently in specific areas of human endeavour. Ideally, such a person should come back to the country and make an impact.

After few years, I decided to travel to New York, where I studied filmmaking for a few weeks. This gave me an intense practical training in filmmaking and it became a springboard for my masters at the New York Film Academy. Now that I have completed my MA at New York Film Academy, I intend to fully go into making films.

My advice to current and prospective students is very simple: impossible is nothing. No matter how hard something you desire seems, how risky it looks, I say go for it. All it takes is a leap of faith because you never know.



Martin Chukwuemeka

I am the founder of the Nigerian UK Based Achievers Award (“NUBAA”) and Projects. NUBAA inspires positivity among the Nigerian young adults in the Diasporas by recognising the achievements of Nigerians in diaspora. We run various workshops on entrepreneurship and personal development. I also own a transport business in Nigeria and Zimbabwe (my wife’s country of origin).

I was motivated to start NUBAA after seeing so much negativity about Nigerians in the media. It is hard to dispute that most of the things the media presents about some individual Nigeria are factual. However, I believed that there are still a lot of good Nigerians with the positivity to inspire change in the next generation of Nigerians who have not been adequately represented. The vision to inspire change in the next generation was also propelled by the fact that whenever you listen to our politicians, they only promise development of infrastructures and nothing or less on the human development. For the “next generation” Nigeria to be different from what we have now, our youths must be developed mentally, academically and attitudinally.

When we started the award in 2010, we faced opposition from some pronounced community groups and leaders in the UK. I guess they felt we started what they should have been doing. We later partnered with one of the Nigerian community groups but to our surprise, on the day of the first event, majority of them boycotted the event leaving us with just a handful of awardees. We later realised that the boycott was because they wanted the award as their own project believing it had great financial potential.

That did not deter us from moving forward and succeeding with the first event. Today,

NUBAA has more projects both in the UK and Nigeria. For instance, we are set for a new project in Nigeria titled: Educate to Motivate and an award for young Nigerian Entrepreneurs.

My advice to young folks with a vision is three-pronged. First, never forget what your first motivation was, because that is what will keep you in line and focused towards accomplishing your vision. Second, due to the possibility of your having a vision but not the full knowledge to execute it, I recommend that you get out there, do your research, ask questions, read the histories of people who have done similar projects and be prepared for disappointments. Finally, you must always reassure yourself of the reason why you are pursuing your vision.



Miriaku Obioha

I remember as a teenager, when I was around 16 years old, I would watch the news on the local Nigerian channel and tears will begin to flow down my eyes. Yes, I would cry uncontrollable for all the things that had gone wrong about this great country of ours. I had no idea where this passion and love for Nigeria came from. Perhaps maybe I saw the great potential Nigeria had in her human and natural resources and we were not even close to that potential. Besides, nothing breaks my heart more than wasted potential. Since then, I knew I had to contribute my quota to effecting change in the system no matter how minute it may seem.

Consequently, as a 19 year old college student, I co-founded Conceptual Campus Initiative (CCI). CCI is a membership-based micro finance institution that supports student entrepreneurs with micro savings and credit packages as well as value added services such as business training, seminars and business development support (BDS) services. In our first semester, we were able to register about seventy members who saved a total of N150, 000 and give a micro loan to one of our members.

This was my first attempt at being an entrepreneur and with that came a mixture of fear and excitement. I feared that I might not be able to provide the leadership needed to really pursue our goal as a non-profit organization. I feared that I lacked experience in such terrain. Despite all these fears however, I was excited about the possibilities of making a difference and doing something instead of sitting on the sidelines.

Three years later after setting up the organization, with three saving packages, 10 dedicated volunteer staffers, 150 members, and approximately 200% increase in our initial

member savings, we still had to close shop due to numerous challenges. One of such challenges was lack of a concrete sustainability platform that would give members real sense of belonging to the initiative.

Consequently in 2010, I decided to go on a journey of learning to increase my skill set and exposure. I moved abroad, worked in corporate America, started blogging and went back to graduate school to get an MBA and Masters in Finance. I also co-founded a consulting firm that is passionate about improving and developing human capital at various levels for businesses and government. This experience taught me the importance of following one's dreams irrespective of setbacks.

In future, I hope to be able to provide solutions to the unemployment problem in Nigeria through our human capital enhancement initiatives and education. I hope to see a world where everyone is equally valued.



Mo Onemola-Adewunmi

I have always considered myself a citizen of the world. I was born in the Gambia; attended primary school in Abuja, Nigeria; high school in Vienna, Austria; and completed my Bachelor's & Master's degrees in the United States. I have always loved being surrounded by people from other cultural backgrounds and introducing them to mine.

I have a bachelor's degree in Economics (with a minor in French) and after my undergraduate studies, I struggled for some time trying to decide what to do with my newly minted degree. My decision to study International Affairs & Economic Development came from my desire to study, in-depth, the most effective ways for countries to implement sustainable solutions to accelerate development. Drawing from my experiences, my passion is to connect the world to Africa through meaningful interactions and engagement.

Although I mask it well, I am generally a shy person. My time at Columbia University, New York was a turning point in my life as I began to actively connect with people who were passionate about social innovation in Africa. New York is a great place to meet people from every corner of the world, involved in every sector of the economy and passionate about the myriad issues that affect mankind. As I began to get involved in various initiatives and activities, from helping to plan two major Economic Forums at Columbia, to serving as the Vice President of the Pan-African network, I expanded my network of vibrant professionals and eventually overcame my shyness.

I currently live in Indianapolis, Indiana. Having realized that a lot of young Africans were disconnected from the realities of advancement going on in Africa, I founded a

group called African Professionals Indy that aims to bring together people interested in African issues. I am also an executive member of the Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO), an establishment that focuses on providing relevant solutions to Nigerians in our community. In light of the recent US-Africa Summit that took place in August 2014, I am working towards organizing the first African Economic Conference in Indiana to encourage companies to look into doing business in Africa.

I believe it is important to keep abreast of things happening in Nigeria. There are a lot of young people taking advantage of the opportunities available and creating relevant solutions that benefit their communities. They are wonderful inspirations and perfect examples of what can be done with limited resources. I constantly encourage young Nigerians to think outside the box and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Africa is rising; be in the know so you can be at the head of the table.



Naomi Simon

My sole purpose in life is to be a catalyst for advancement. Therefore, at the age of 21 in October 2013, I launched 20Something Podcast— an audio show dedicated to highlighting issues facing the African Caribbean community and combatting social and economic injustices. So far, we've addressed rape, black history, overcoming adversity as well as more humorous subjects, such as "How Not To Be A Sidechick". 20Something Podcast is my way of giving back to a community that has provided me with so much.

Over the months, I have found that perseverance and a great desire have helped to maintain 20Something Podcast. I am fast learning that in order to successfully make a difference, I must serve. I must be passionate and assume a great deal of effort. Most importantly, I must develop strong mutually beneficial relationships as my dream cannot be realized alone.

I have a vision, which I hope to share with the world. I dream of the African-Caribbean community becoming economically powerful so that we may determine our own fate. My purpose has not been fulfilled until this has been achieved. As long as there is injustice, then I will do what I can to speak up and help. As a member of the African-Caribbean Diaspora, I believe that we have work to do. The missing Chibok girls, the slaughters in Congo, the murder of Mike Brown, the treatment of Mark Duggan, are just a few of the atrocities that have happened to us recently.

I did not initiate this vision of the African-Caribbean community economic stability. I was born in London to a Grenadian father and a Nigerian mother, both of who contributed by running Saturday schools specializing in helping African-Caribbean children to

succeed. As a result I travelled a lot, met an array of inspirational people and witnessed sad truths in society. It is from these people and these experiences that the values of giving to my community were embedded.

I studied and continue to study at Loughborough University where I became Vice President of the African Caribbean Society. I don't consider this to be one of my successes, mainly because I didn't achieve all that I intended to, and perhaps for that reason, I would deem the experience a failure. However, what I learned from it was priceless. I learnt the value of nurturing and listening to those one meets, whether through friendship or business.

So, my story is really just beginning, and I'm excited to see how I can be of help. For the future, I envisage running a social enterprise dedicated to attaining my life goal.



Nnodim Blossom

I consider myself to be a social media strategist, speaker, blogger, entrepreneur and an advocate for social good, working towards inspiring, connecting and empowering individuals, brands and businesses in Nigeria. I believe that social media used for social good is key to achieving development. This is further expressed by deliberately writing as a niche blogger with particular interest in social media, “social good” and technology.

I recently co-founded Digital Media Development Initiative, a Non-profit Organization that focuses on leveraging digital and new media tools for sustainable development. Over the years, I have collaborated with an exciting team of young Nigerians to create and host the very popular AdoptATweep event that provides opportunities for young people to connect to social media and use the platform for commercial and social good.

I have worked with public and private organizations in various commercial and development campaigns. My clients include One Campaign, Gates Foundation, Federal Ministry of Finance, Mashable, Population Council, Save the Children Nigeria, United Nations, Guardians of the Nation International, amongst others. In 2014, to my utmost shock, I got a surprise inclusion on a high-powered global listing of Social Media personalities. This is a list of the top 100 most influential black people on digital/social media.

A large proportion of the “yuppie generation” is ideally passion-driven with little or no concern for diplomacy and tact. The latter attributes are core ingredients in driving change. When passion is the only driver, what we see is a class of people that allow sentiments to rule their advocacy efforts. I believe that if more young people focus on getting their facts right before embarking on any given social media campaign, the change that

is expected will become inevitable. Secondly, young Nigerians should shed the entitlement mentality and make far-reaching demands that even politicians cannot relegate to the background.

I currently work at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation as a Management Information System Officer in the Pipelines and Products Marketing Company subsidiary. I have been quite concerned about Environmental Governance issues and will take a gap year starting from October 2014 to enrol at Coventry University to study Environmental Management. Subsequently, I intend to channel my focus towards becoming more involved in Environmental management Issues either as a policy shaper or as an activist.



Onyi Anyado

I am a multiple award-winning international Entrepreneur, Keynote Speaker and Life Coach who specialises in leadership development, entrepreneurship and youth impact coaching. On recognising and regarding my mandate, mission and message of distinction, taking up a leadership position was a natural decision. One of the greatest leaders of recent times, John Maxwell once said, “Everything rises and falls on leadership”. With the truth in this quote and the dearth of leaders capable of distinguishing themselves but more importantly striving to distinguish others, my desire, determination and dedication to raise a generation of distinguished leaders has actually become a way of life.

I once wrote, “Entrepreneurship and leadership go hand-in-hand’ like Facebook and Twitter”. With the world embracing entrepreneurship now more than ever, the job market is constantly changing the playing field. With many young people in Africa, Europe and around the world failing to nurturing their entrepreneurial gift; and with my teaching, coaching, workshops, master classes, seminars and conferences, I decided to make entrepreneurship a way of life for everyone who I have the privilege to speak to.

My experiences in the personal development industry over the last four years have been awesome, strategic, blessed, fulfilling but also with challenges. That my message of distinction has been regarded, recognised and respected around the world is so humbling, exciting and a real blessing to myself many others and me. I remember the early days of speaking to an audience and I still had to walk home from lack of funds. But I realised that my passion for human development is not about my financial conditions or me but about my audiences’ future possibilities. Now, I have received awards, given a TEDx talk titled ‘From Detention to Distinction’ and spoken at international conferences.

My advice to young people is: start local, think global and constantly raise the bar of excellence. I once noted somewhere that “an entrepreneur is a leader of excellence, trailblazer and pioneer who constantly brings change to their generation”. I believe that Leadership is bringing people into new realms of excellence and challenging them to become distinguished in their chosen field.

My plan for the future involves constantly challenging, inspiring, empowering, equipping, teaching and coaching my generation to become students, entrepreneurs or leaders of distinction. I’m currently speaking across the world on different platforms with my message of distinction. My plan for the next 10 years is to work on the next 20 years that’s the visionary in me.



Richard Awoyemi

Similar to the success stories of social entrepreneurs today, the desire for financial liberation was at the heart of my entrepreneurial journey.

Although I was born in Nigeria, I migrated to the United Kingdom in 2004 with my parents. At around the age of 12, I developed interest for music, which later led to starting my very own music production line “MC Kozmo Productions”. Although my knowledge in the field was still in its infancy, I studied until I was able to get a few clients. Before long, I was selling musical instrumentals at £100 per piece to upcoming artists. I was making good money at a period when everyone wanted to be an artiste. And so, for me, the most important entrepreneurial characteristic is the ability to understand social trends and adapt to any potential changes.

I currently operate a number of companies with a good friend of mine, Tobi Ajayi. The journey has been rough and tough but also very exciting. Starting a business is a lot like giving birth to a child: you will lose sleep at nights and it will require 100% of your time. You will no longer be able to partake in what many people regard as “fun” activities.

And, after 3 years of running a company, I have discovered 4 prerequisites for a successful business. The first is that you must surround yourself with like-minded individuals who are not afraid to disagree with you. Secondly, you need a mentor, someone who is doing what you would love to do and study them. Thirdly, plan the next 5 years of your personal and business life in order to monitor progress. Finally, you must learn failing, as failure is the best way to develop. A number of business models and plans tend to omit contingency plans in the event of failure.

I have a number of exciting plans for the future, and I look forward to the birth of the XW Group, a movement that will, one day, operate as a collective point for the world's leading wedding vendors.



Sheun David-Onamusi

I have always believed that one must define one's priorities and values early in life. Otherwise, one could fall for all sorts of schemes along one's way. Priorities and values are two things that determine, to a large extent, what people are remembered for.

My motivation for taking up leadership and entrepreneurial positions at an early age has been, primarily, because of an inner value system shaped by a desire to make positive change in my generation. My utmost priority is to die emptied. I learned early, after experiencing the pain of seeing a few of my friends die, that no one lives forever. As a result I made up my mind to maximize my potentials. I made up my mind at 18 to be focused on making a difference in life. Perhaps, some might think it pride but you should always desire that your impact be felt after you have left a place. Everyone ought to leave a legacy.

Between 2009 and 2012, I opened and ran the flagship store for T.M. Lewin (the UK shirtmakers) in Abuja, Nigeria. This store was highly successful in revenue and soon opened up bigger opportunities for me. I then set up my Retail and Marketing Solutions Company, and in the same year consulted for Zara (part of Inditex Group) and trained several companies in Abuja. Within that same period I published my first book. These experiences were "exciting" in every sense of the word! They challenged me to be better and dream bigger.

My advice to aspiring leaders and entrepreneurs is to work hard at being better individuals, learn to identify and maximize opportunities when they come. Many great opportunities are disguised in daily conversations with friends and family. You will be shocked

what you discover when you listen carefully and read between the lines.

Moving forward, I will be working on making my new adventure a success. My luxury bespoke men's shoes and accessories brand is due for launch and it aims to rival established luxury brands such as Salvatore Ferragamo and others. I am also working on a motivational book inspired by the Yoruba Language proverbs. While growing up, I heard a lot of Yoruba mantras, which has helped in shaping me as individual. Over the next 10 years I will be speaking on platforms, inspiring people to be the best they can be. I will also participate actively politics with the aim of influencing policies that makes social conditions better for the average person.



Tochukwu Onu

I am a 2012 graduate of The University of Exeter where I undertook a Master's degree in Engineering and Management, having previously graduated from Coventry University with a B.Eng degree in Mechanical Engineering. I am the CEO and Executive Director of Afriteo Enterprises U.K. Ltd with Afriteo Restaurant as its first venture.

My motivation for engaging in entrepreneurial activities stems from my passion and love of being in positions where I can provide/render service to the populace whether as a business or as a leader. I also grew up in an entrepreneurship-oriented family, where I started helping to make business decisions from the age of 10. As soon as I concluded my studies in the UK, I wanted to explore what it took to run a business in that very strict and policy oriented environment. Although I must point out that being an entrepreneur involves a lot of hard work, risks, resilience and courage because one is now responsible, not only towards self, but also to one's employees. I have, so far, enjoyed undertaking projects and gained a lot of experience from being my own boss.

However, my experience so far has been one of ups and downs. Let me quickly point out that running a business in the U.K. without the presence of my family members has been the toughest and most challenging project I have undertaken till date. This is because the environment, work ethics, regulations, policies and the likes can be overwhelming. That notwithstanding, I must equally note that I have enjoyed every bit of it. The most thrills and excitements come from the positive feedback you get from customers; when you look at their faces beaming with smiles and they tell you how amazing your product is.

My advice to young folks who desire to run a business in the U.K. is to make sure they

do every bit of their homework. In other words, you must know the nitty-gritty of the business, and ask yourself if it is one you would love to continue running in 5 years. Remember that if you run a business that you have a passion for, then it becomes an interest rather than a chore.

Growing up, I have always wanted to change and influence policies but I didn't want to go about it in the usual route. I have wanted to influence, empower and change the lives of people around me and then go on to lead a transformation agenda politically after I must have gained the trust and good will of the populace. So, my plan for the future will be to continue on this route of entrepreneurship but moving my investments and vast experience back home. I intend to replicate what I have learnt from running businesses in the U.K in Nigeria. When I finally make my entry into the political scene, my drive will be based on the theory of "continuous improvement" (doing better today what you did yesterday), which is the drive of my business at the present.

I see myself as a full-grown entrepreneur in the next 10 years with a few portfolios of businesses and investments. I intend to use my business empire to empower people around me, especially the young people drumming into their minds that impossibility is nothing, but for want of trying.



Tunde Leye

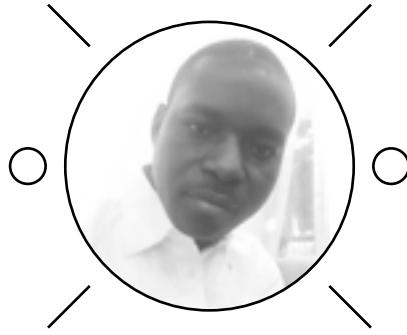
Some people have a passion and gift for one thing. And they pursue that passion with all their might and eventually succeed stupendously at it. Well, I didn't have it that easy. You see, I was a confused young man. Confused, because I was passionate and gifted at not one, but three different things. I studied Computer Science at the University of Lagos and in the process stumbled across electronic payment systems. When I eventually left school, I joined the fray of payment systems in Nigeria at its early stages and I've been part of building this.

But I also loved writing and could really sing. So, I was confused because I assumed I needed to focus on one of these things and drop the others. But over time, I have found a balance and now whilst my electronic payment career is in full swing, I've been able to emerge as one of the new voices of writing in Nigeria, with a runaway blog fiction series for a record continuity of two years. In addition, I've published two novels and a novella. I've also started the Write Right project, which has grown to become the biggest online literary prize in Nigeria. Some of the brightest new writers in the country have been discovered through this prize. Recognizing the power of the story to transcend the writing medium, I partnered with Titi of Inspiration FM, Lagos to bring my online series to radio weekly to resounding success.

With these experiences behind me, I've gone on to incorporate a full media company, TLSPLACE MEDIA, to handle the publishing of my books and adapting my stories for other media, including radio, TV and film. Our first short film, A Christmas Story, directed by Imoh Umoren premiered in December 2014.

In all of this, I do not forget that my contributions to solving the problems in my country are important. I therefore work with children to engender reading in them. I share my thoughts bi-weekly in some of the biggest online media in Nigeria including YNaija, TheScoop and NewsWire.

What the future holds? It's threefold – in the e-payment space, in publishing and writing, and in music. The prospects are exciting and even though the challenges seem daunting, who has built anything of worth without them? I look forward to looking back years from now and saying: Wow, we built that.



Wale Micaiah

There are some of our realities we will never be able to fully understand how they came to be, though we may attempt to connect the dots. Such is the case of my studying Math/Statistics at the University of Lagos. Throughout my stay in school I tried to find answers to the industry application of the discipline in Nigeria – some of my lecturers could not help.

When I came across Computer, it temporarily diverted my attention from the questions my heart was asking. That experience began my foray into the world of IT and what I do today. But questions of the heart do not really go away until they are answered. If you truly want to live fully and be impactful, you must provide answers to those questions – or at least make some attempts.

While still engaged professionally in my job, the questions of the heart often knock and requests for answers. My first attempt at providing answers to these questions of the heart was attraction to data and helping people leverage on it as a decision making tool. Basically, I help individuals, teams, organisations and governments make sense of data. Understanding and interpreting data just comes easy. The more I stay with it, the more my heaviness is lifted.

I have had opportunities to provide clarity with data and participate in state and national advocacy on data-driven decision making as relating to the budget, health, education, and divers topics. Also, it became relevant in understanding that students' failure in national exams like WAEC, NECO, and JAMB is partly misalignment between students' areas of academic strength and course/subject of study. This propelled me to write two

books which proffers solutions to exam failures and making career choices. These books are distributed freely as my Personal Social Responsibility (PSR) whenever I speak at youth programmes.

The pathway is clearer, to build StatiSense (making sense of numbers) into a global brand that helps individuals, organizations, and government make better decisions through intelligence from relevant data. Eventually, it wasn't a mistake that I and statistics crossed path. This discovery has simply taught me and I share with everyone, do not shy away from pausing to provide answers to the questions of your heart. Unlocking those questions provides an opportunity to let the world feel your presence – while alive and thereafter.

PART B:
LEADERSHIP



Ayo Sogunro

The history of human existence is often described through the activities of individuals who have been able to redirect the flow of human interactions and activities in their immediate and remote environments. Such interference is often inadvertent, and mostly prompted by a deep sense of social justice. And this observation is mostly true of my participation in Nigerian social activism. I found myself labelled, somewhat, as a leading writer in the sphere of Nigerian critical thought when, without any design on my part, an article I wrote in 2012 became viral.

Since then, I have featured in news media, lectured on social issues, led public demonstrations, and published two more books. Although I am a lawyer by training and practice, I have been more inclined to express my advocacy through writing. I have always levitated towards creative writing from an early age: co-writing my first book at 19. In school, I annoyed my peers with unsolicited articles consistently pinned on the notice boards.

Since then, I have written three more books: *Death in the Dawn* (a play), *The Wonderful Life of Senator Boniface and other Sorry Tales* (short stories), and *Everything in Nigeria is Going to Kill You* (critical essays). My books have, generally, had positive reception due to their direct relevance to the socio-political affairs of the average Nigerian reader. The necessity of this link between creative writing and everyday reality holds for both non-fictional and fictional literature. This is not to extol political commentary, but simply to buttress the idea that art must have a connection with life.

But there have been rough moments too, especially where the subject is socially sensi-

tive. For example, a university audience has booed me while I was giving a lecture criticising the draconian Nigerian anti-gay law and the violent persecutions of LGBT people in Nigeria. I have faced similar discriminations from companies and businesses that do not want to associate with my social criticisms.

And this is why advocacy is relevant: action is the ultimate expression of thought. A serious writer has to put words into action through social education, public protests, and direct and indirect political participation. More importantly, I believe that when properly directed, educative and critical writing can be a powerful form of social activism.

I am currently running #LawforLaymen (legal classes for educated Nigerians), while working on my next book, and I also engage in literary awareness and sexual and reproductive rights work. Still, I'm looking forward to a Nigeria where my activism would have become unnecessary: one where I can quietly read a book without being surrounded by social turmoil, but until that day, I will continue to serve—whether solicited or not—as a public conscience and social “gadfly”.



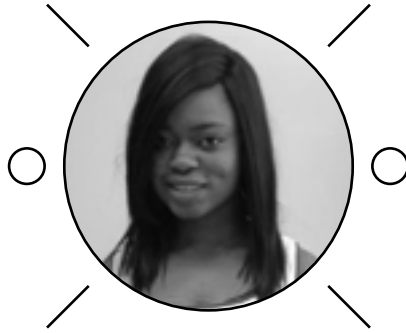
Ayodeji Akinwowo

My motivation for taking up a leadership position is simply one word: PASSION. I had passion for solving problems. Wherever I see a challenging situation, no matter how hard it may seem, the first thing that strikes me is, “how can this problem be solved?” My motive goes beyond the money because I am sure I haven’t made as much money (in any currency) as I could. For me, what is more rewarding beyond money is seeing the positive impact of my actions on lives. This has much more value than silver or gold.

To be honest, my leadership experience has been “interesting”. Interesting in the sense that we’ve had our share of ups and downs, maybe more downs than ups. However, the beauty is that one ‘up’ can overturn numerous ‘downs’. For example, in one of the teams I manage, we focus on rebuilding dilapidated schools in Nigeria. During our first attempt on the project in a primary school located somewhere between Lagos and Ogun states in Nigeria, we faced a lot of challenges such as raising funds, getting volunteers and fulfilling our obligations to the school. Also, the officials in the school put pressure on us to deliver since we had made our goal known to them. It took us much longer than we expected but after much hassles, we achieved the first part of our goal. When I visited the school with another member of the group sometime later, the joy and smiles on the faces of the teachers, pupils and headmaster was overwhelming. My joy on that day made all the earlier challenges and hassles inconsequential.

My advice to other youths is not to give up despite the many disappointments that would manifest on the way to achieving goals. Keep pushing on because the reward far exceeds all the challenges put together. It is worth it!

My plans are simple. I want to keep doing what I've been doing. More importantly, I want to scale up and extend my services to affect more lives. I am working with two groups at the moment. The first is Onetouch Foundation, which helps rebuild broken down schools in Nigeria and providing academic support for indigent students. Next is NutsandBolts Nigeria, which provides free training and one-on-one mentoring for Science and Engineering undergraduates in Nigerian Universities. We are targeting 50 mentees per year with NutsandBolts and aiming to rebuild 2 classroom buildings per year with Onetouch Foundation.



Ayodeji Osowobi

I am Executive Director at Stand to End Rape Initiative (“STER”), a Non-Governmental Organization. I have a Master’s Degree in International Relations with specialization in Gender Studies from Swansea University, United Kingdom. I have worked at the United Nations Headquarters and with Half the Sky Movement, New York.

My passion to advocate against rape and for rape survivors came from the “culture of silence” in Nigeria. In developed countries, the issue of rape stays on the front burner, but this is not the case in Nigeria.

My primary concern is for rape survivors because of the traumatic effects of the obnoxious act on their psyche. Once raped, they are shamed to silence and hardly receive the necessary medical, legal and psychosocial support. Most traumatizing is the fallout issues that attend rape incidents.

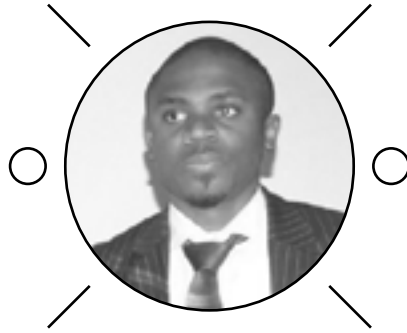
For instance, young women sometimes involuntarily become sex workers because they are dealing with sexual issues associated with rape. Similarly, some teenagers, having been raped get pregnant with no-access to reproductive health and possibly are unable to continue with their education. I try to alleviate this problem via creation of awareness against rape and providing support to survivors.

It has been a challenging journey since rape happens daily and it often feels like so much need to be accomplished. However, testimonies of victims through my organization have been motivating. The highlight for me was when I was awarded the Best Use of Social Media by Non Profit at the 2014 Social Media Africa Awards.

Although it all seems rosy, I have to reiterate that it has been very challenging, particularly in terms of getting resources and support to achieve our objectives. The reality is that many still perceive rape as a trivial issue. As a result, some of our would-be sponsors are hesitant when we seek for their support to help fight the scourge. But at STER we hardly ever get discouraged. That is the piece of advice I have for the youths. When your ideas are turned down, don't be discouraged. Reevaluate your goal, get soaked in your passion, gain knowledge, build a TEAM, and draw up strategic plans and START! Never wait till you have the resources, because truth is: You will never start if you keep waiting.

For me, the future is now. As the Executive Director of STER, I hope to advocate for laws that will deter people's engagement in rape. In lieu of that, we currently have a partnership with the Ministry of Justice on projects that will help end rape. In addition, we are currently building a mobile application to improve reportage of rape in Nigeria, where names of convicted rapists will also be published.

In 10 years, I hope STER Initiative would have expanded beyond its present frontiers; I also hope to have stepped down as Executive Director of the organization, ventured into social enterprise and, hopefully, become a Minister for Women Affairs.



Bamikole Omishore

I am Bamikole Omishore, the Special Assistant to Senator Bukola Saraki on Media and Advocacy; a position I have held for almost 3 years.

Prior to my appointment in 2011, I worked with Fortune 500 in United States of America, while I managed my own consulting firm and also had the opportunity to be an active member of Big Brothers in Washington DC.

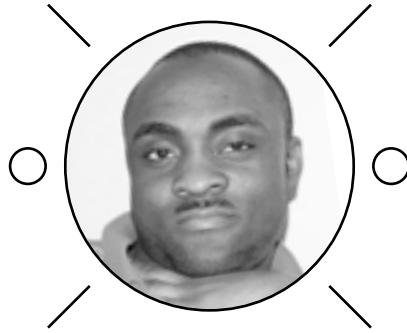
My principal motivation for all this has always been SERVICE to humanity. This explains why my propelling force to positively impact lives by seeking opportunities for development in ANY immediate community I find myself: irrespective of the race, religion, social class or age.

Working with Senator Bukola Saraki, the current Senate President of Nigeria and a former Governor of Kwara State and Chairman of Nigeria Governors' Forum, who has recorded tremendous milestones in his service to humanity is no mean task. However, the learning values that come with it are too precious to overlook, particularly for humanitarians like me.

My fulfilment usually comes when my principal calls me to get my opinion on national issues. This gives me a scarce opportunity to make recommendations that might be implemented on salient issues.

My plan for the future is to create a platform that will bridge the gap between young Africans and the older generation in order to create solid knowledge transfer to help

develop our continent. Presently, I'm making this happen by selecting young Nigerians from different walks of life to meet with decision makers across the globe. This affords the two generations a platform to share ideas and follow up for implementation in order to improve youth involvement in governance.



Chukwunonso Ngwu

Leadership is all about rendering positive service to humanity and passionately helping to actualize the collective dreams of a given people. My involvement in leadership positions was borne out of a need to either fill a gap or help correct one anomaly or the other. Generally, I've always been motivated to help nurture a dream individuals and organizations alike.

A good and most recent example was the leadership role I played in the Association of Nigerian Students, Coventry University between 2009 and 2010. Though a young association at that time, we were able to relate with other universities. Together with my team and with the help of its founders, I was also able to give Nigerian students in Coventry University and environs a good image. For example, we attended an international conference of Nigerian students at a time that a Nigerian Student was linked with an attempt to bomb a US plane, but we had the opportunity to generate sufficient goodwill from the school authorities as well as the Council.

More importantly, Nigerian students got actively involved in the running of the Students Union of the university. This was the first time two Africans (Lekan Oshunkoya and Emmanuel Lekunze) were part of the 4-member Executive of the Students Union Government. We gave the Nigerian students a voice and encouraged them to realize their dreams even when it seemed a mirage in a foreign land. It is important to mention that the host community benefited from some of our voluntary activities like the Student Ambassadorial program. They were numerous seminars and high profile guest speakers who came around to motivate us and let us know that they have been there and they have done that.

No doubt, being a part of the association was very challenging. It may have been easy for me to adapt to a new environment, abide by the culture, interface with foreigners and work harmoniously with them. But then, it was often difficult to convince the rest of the group and give them reasons that this was the way to go. Thankfully, it all turned out well, as we had an eventful and successful tenure.

To the younger generation, especially those who have had the opportunity to mix with people of different cultures beyond the shores of Nigeria: I advise them to develop positive traits that will help them become better persons. Times are changing. This not only helps us become better people, but we will also help to reduce stereotypical assumptions. I also advise younger ones to endeavour at all cost to have a skill and have a passion. Above all, they need possess the attitude and the willingness necessary for making the world a better place.

I currently work in the IT sector as a software developer. I hope to gather enough experience, and by the grace of God get the opportunity to influence my fatherland and the world at large through my skills. As they say, to whom much is given, much is expected.



Deinsam Ogan

I believe that every leader must have a heart—deadly or lovely. According to an adage, to become “a good leader” not just “a leader” you must be “a good follower”. In other words, you can become a “leader”, but necessarily “a good leader” if you hadn’t been a good follower. However, how do you become a good follower? My father once said, “Son, if you don’t love the family, you can’t lead it. You must love a cause, and live for it! Then you can be a good follower and eventually a good leader.”

Poor leadership is a great evil to society. Nevertheless, with little deeds of love and kindness to society and humanity such as volunteering, mentoring, submission, being proactive, and standing for the truth, you can simultaneously play the roles of following or leading when you find yourself in such positions to play either of them.

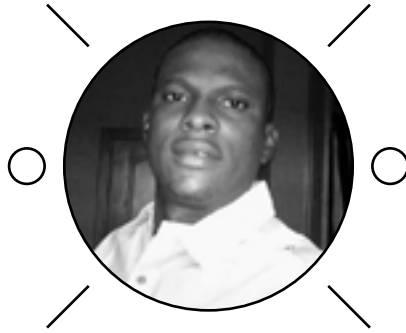
I rose through the leadership ranks first as a choir boy, to a boy in the brigades, and then a community and national youth leader through service, humility, volunteering, speaking out, raising campaigns, and giving back to society in little ways that I could. Presently, I’m serving as the PhD Researchers’ Representative at the University of Wolverhampton.

I graduated as a geologist from University of Port Harcourt in 2005. I went for NYSC in 2006, received a national award from President Umaru Yar’Adua as one of the Best Corps Members in Nigeria at 2007 and earned an automatic employment into the Federal Service in 2008. Thereafter, I secured a scholarship for a MSc. in Environment Management at Coventry University, UK in 2010 and became President of the Nigerian Society there till 2011. It was through this platform that I led inspiring activities and received awards,

including the award of “Excellence in Service” in 2012.

Honestly, every individual can achieve all that or even much more. What is important is that you seek satisfaction from passion and not wealth. Also important is that you galvanize strength be faithful to your passion and dreams. And whenever you achieve a goal, don't get complacent. You must do all you can to be innovative and to keep-on moving. Finally, I believe there's an important message for everyone in this quote from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings:

“Saruman believes it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. I found it is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love.” – Gandalf



Demola Olanrewaju

William Shakespeare wrote: “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them”. My leadership experience is one that was thrust upon me. I got studied English in the university but had other ideas about how my life on campus would play out until some fortuitous events conspired to pull me into student unionism. I was deemed by most of the stakeholders to be the best person for the position of the Student Union Public Relations Officer and was seamlessly elevated to that height. Thus, I was elected into the office of the PRO unopposed and I held it for two tenures.

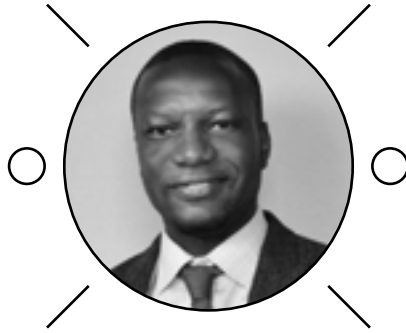
I was also chosen to sit as a delegate at the convention of the National Association of Nigerian Students (“NANS”), where I was once stabbed in the head during an election dispute and held hostage in a room for seven hours. But my shining moment was when, alongside the present NANS president Yinka Gbadebo, I successfully led students in pursuit of campus cultists who had killed a cadet officer and another innocent student. We caught up with them, apprehended several of them and handed them over to the security operatives.

The biggest challenge we faced as a Union, however, was when then Governor of Ekiti State, Ayo Fayose, closed the College of Medicine. It was a move we opposed throughout our time as leaders and my voice was one of the loudest, both against the governor and the Vice-Chancellor. Yet, I managed to communicate our position without denigrating their personalities. The price of that saga was great but with focus on our goals while refusing to yield ground to people who tried to hijack our struggle, we managed to scale through.

My policy of not denigrating individuals at the time would pay off few years later as I found myself in the campaign for Ayo Fayose to return as the Governor of Ekiti State. Leading his twitter campaign was a small position but I held the forte strongly and my knowledge of the man was put to good use to aid his re-emergence as governor.

Future leaders would do well to learn that not every opponent is an enemy and even where an enemy is revealed, once that enemy is turned to an ally, the opposition is destroyed or decimated.

Bigger than that lesson though is that I find it more in line with my person never to devise ambitions but to wait for events to play out and push me to leadership – some have greatness thrust upon them. The moral is that you must understand yourself and always be prepared. There is no greater calamity than an unprepared leader. This philosophy shapes my vision for the next season of my life – I go into it without specific personal ambitions but with the sole aim of preparing for the call to leadership. I am certain it will come my way at some point and when it does, I'm sure I would be prepared for it.



Jibril Shehu

Tom Peters once said, “Leaders do not create followers, they create leaders” I was graced with the honor of being the first child which provided me exciting opportunities to exercise my leadership skills on my adorable siblings. Serving as a good example to them meant I needed good grades, therefore, failure wasn’t an option. I’m forever indebted to my parents for their guidance, wisdom and foresight. They shaped me to be driven, self-reliant and resilient.

I pursued an engineering degree which was clearly the highlight of my professional life. I earned both my BSc. and MSc. Degrees in Civil and Structural Engineering from Ohio University, in the U.S. As a student I maintained a focused and disciplined attitude toward my education. While in college, I initiated and helped create the Structural Engineers Association of Ohio Student chapter which is the first of its kind in the state of Ohio. The professional organization serves as a networking and learning platform for young budding engineers.

Currently, I serve as a Structural Quality Assurance Manager for GPD Group in Akron Ohio. I’m responsible for engineering innovation, design tools and overseeing the Telecommunications group’s QA/QC program. Furthermore, I have successfully managed a wide range of services to the largest telecommunication providers and tower owners in the USA such as AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile, American Tower Corporation and Crown Castle. I’ve obtained my Professional Engineer’s license in Ohio and Council of Registered Engineers in Nigeria. For seven years, I’ve served as a professional evaluator of Capstone Structural Engineering Design Projects for seniors at Ohio University, where engineering students present their final projects.

Nelson Mandela said it best “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” I feel compelled to change the status quo of Northern Nigeria by being an active contributor. So I created an organization (TransformArewa) which educates and empowers students on diverse topics relating to education, entrepreneurship and STEM. This group is currently collaborating with American Tower to provide a water distribution system and a library to a school in Sokoto State. As a member of Nigerian Young Professional Forum (Northern Chapter), we’ve collaborated with TransformArewa and Sokoto State Ministry of Education to implement a CBT training program to prepare over 500 schools (20,000 students) for computer based national exams. I’ve seen the transformative power of education and aim to help young people gain meaningful employment. Ultimately, my advice is to strive to aim high and harness new opportunities by that diversifying one’s skills and education.

The future: MBA program starting January 2017, build on our startup company, continue to be an asset to my company. Extend my skype program I did for Illinois College “Thinking like an Engineer” to Nigeria. I might consider politics if it provides the best avenue to positively impact those who need it most.



Joshua Obichebendu

I am currently in my 2nd year at Loughborough University studying Electrical and Electronic Engineering and serving as the President of the Nigerian Society. Although, it wasn't my original intention to become the President of the Nigerian Society, somewhere along the line, I readjusted my priorities and became interested in taking a more active role in the student affairs of the University. I didn't want to be just a student who passed through the walls of Loughborough University without at least leaving an indelible mark behind.

The main reason I ran for President of the Nigerian Society was because I felt that the society needed a youthful influence to get it to the next level. I had looked at Nigerian Societies in other Universities in the UK and believed that the Society at Loughborough could do the same, if not better.

Having become President, my estimation of the responsibilities I'd be saddled with fell way short of the real thing. It's been hard and I know it will continue to be. The most difficult challenge is making decisions on behalf of the Society. The implication of this is that I take responsibility for whatever decisions I make, whether good or bad. I'm aware that every decision made as the President must be the best for the Society and in collective interests of members. While the thought of being charged with this huge responsibility can be thrilling, it also bears down heavily on me sometimes.

My advice to current and prospective Nigerian students in the UK and across the world is to do what I've done: set their priorities right and make sure they leave a mark in their Universities. It doesn't necessarily have to be in the exact way as I did mine. And when

you're priorities are determined, stay focus and don't be distracted from your primary goal. You should also stay "hungry and stay foolish". Keep in mind that academic work is not the only form of education available.



JJ Omojuwa

Save for certain periods in High School and the University, I have not taken any concrete position as a leader. This is not to say I have not found myself leading people to achieve a common purpose. I have been privileged to be part of a growing group of conscious Nigerians over the last half decade. I'd like to think that the activities of this group of Nigerians, along with the formation of an opposition party that finally saw need for formidable political alignment, gave birth to the change of power in Nigeria today.

On the entrepreneurial front, I am at the early stages of a lot of things even though my company was officially registered 7 years ago. My eponymous blog started in 2009 but through hard work I have appeared at some of the most important national, continental and international conferences. I have benefitted immensely from relationships and alliances. The journey has been helped by my willingness to always work with others to achieve a common purpose. As a young man, there is yet a lot to do achieve in life. Therefore, it feels a bit too early for me to be profiled in this project because what I have done so far is nothing compared to my dreams and aspirations.

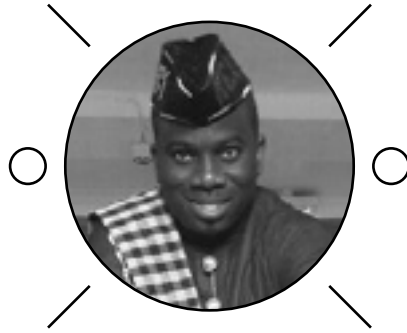
The critical challenge has been in dealing with people. Sometimes you trust people to be true to your faith in them but they are often the ones that misrepresent your stories and your essence. Next to that is the difficulty of finding the right people to get things done excellently.

My biggest excitement remains the things we are yet to achieve and the people we are working with to get them done. As much as people are the source of some of the challenges we face, the right people have kept us excited. The future is beautiful mostly be-

cause I see some of these allies and good friends in it.

I am not the type to make a 10-year plan. The truth is that even my 5-year plans often get torn up along the way because too many things you expect to happen in the long term materialize much earlier. As a result, you are compelled to make new, bigger plans. I am presently looking to influence a few things in the entertainment industry. If we pull off our plans, then we'd be around for yet a long time, before we set the rules afresh for those coming on our trail.

I don't often look too far into the future, because I always make sure to be about what I have in my hands now, what I have today. I am a believer in the power of each new day, because getting to serve each new "today" to its optimum means that the future will always be fine. One day at a time, we step into our dreams.



Kelechi Anyikude

I am Anyikude Kelechi Uzoma, a PhD researcher at the University of Leeds, UK and the President of the Nigerian Society at the same University. My motivation for taking up leadership position stems from my passion for serving and contributing my quota to the unity and growth of Nigeria. I am also motivated to lead by the possibility of inspiring other Nigerian students, catering for them, building trust amongst them and having a vibrant Nigerian Society that will be a force to reckon with.

My experience in leadership has been challenging, interesting, exciting and educating. I have been able to interact with Nigerians from a wide range of academic, religious and ethnic backgrounds, most of whom are now my friends. I have also associated with people from other countries and learnt about their various cultures. Amongst other things, I also wear traditional attires on Friday while I am on campus to promote Nigeria's traditional attires and also lead by example. My organizational skills have also improved through workshops, networking sessions and other events organized by the Nigerian society.

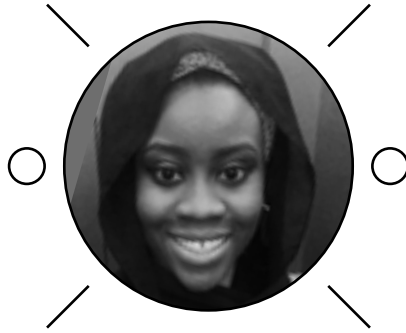
The major challenge was how to bridge the gap between the postgraduates and the undergraduates and how to raise funds for the society. These challenges were overcome by revamping the Nigerian society with events focused on students' needs, skills and networking and also creating awareness through social media, flyers and emails to students. This led to increase in membership of the society, upturn in the finances of the society and improved collaboration between the postgraduates and undergraduates.

My advice to students is simple: Strive hard to achieve success, serve your community or

University in the best possible way and be your brother's keeper.

I intend to continue with research within the field of Environmental Engineering and design a suitable Environmental Management plan for developing countries. I hope to contribute towards promoting energy efficiency and renewables and encourage technologies that offer alternatives for clean and safe energy supply and use. I also intend to work as an environmental expert in organizations such as UN Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), Environmental research Institutes and Environmental Consultant firms.

Finally, if given the opportunity, I will like to serve my country and contribute my quota to her development and greatness.



Nana Aisha Salaudeen

Where do you see yourself in *insert number of years here*?

The above question used to annoy me, particularly because I had nothing planned for myself. No particular career I wanted to pursue and no talent to build on. I decided to study Business Economics for my first degree and later on bagged a Masters Degree in Finance, Accounting and Management.

It wasn't until my fourth year in University I realized I wanted to be more than an economist and/or accountant. I love reading and writing; my pen had been spilling both fiction and non-fiction since 2011. I've also always been an advocate for good governance, gender equity and youth participation in politics. I decided to find a balance between my passion and schoolwork. I channeled most of my writing to all causes I deeply care about i.e. encouraging youths to participate in politics and demand accountability from the government, pointing out how certain parts of the Nigerian culture and system encourage subjugation of female rights etc. This initially did not go down well as a lot of people on and offline 'booed' me, they did not like how I questioned everything and referred to my activism as "noise making". Subsequently, I began writing for countless blogs and newspapers that contacted me after an article I wrote in 2014 went viral. I am also currently working on my first publication, a collection of poems, which should be out next year.

Earlier this year, I decided it was not enough to write or speak about social issues – I wanted to be among the young Nigerians creating solutions to our numerous social problems. Being a fan of teamwork, I joined *Haemo* and *Snapaya*. The two social or-

ganisations are run by passionate Nigerians with knacks for creating ideas that solve social needs. Haemo is a collective organisation that connects people who need lifesaving blood urgently with volunteer blood donors – it could be a soldier on the battlefield, a pregnant woman or a sickle cell warrior. The idea is to bring Nigeria's blood problem to the minimum. Snapaya on the other hand helps to minimize Nigeria's "stock photo problem", the idea is to help people find authentic high-resolution photos online, free of charge.

All the above activities are based on a code I created for myself to continuously contribute to solving problems in Nigeria. I'm looking forward to a future where young Nigerians are part of the change they demand and channel whatever talent it is they possess to creating ideas that solve needs.



Obie Opara

The driving force behind my running for a leadership position was the loss of someone close to me at an early stage in my life. This was a turning point in my life when I realised the importance of placing the needs of others before mine. Thereafter I subconsciously lived with this ideal of serving until I identified the opportunity of contesting for the post of the Students' Union President as an ideal platform to lead and care for others. I saw it as an opportunity to fight for peoples' needs while also inspiring them to explore their full potentials.

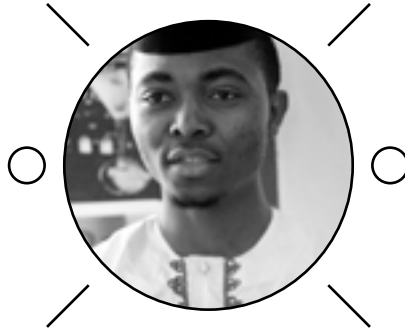
So far, the experience has been phenomenal, yet humbling. At this stage, I can say that I have done more listening than talking; after all, good leaders are good listeners.

I have also had the privilege of meeting people who share with me similar ideas and beliefs despite coming from diverse backgrounds. Most of them—like me, believe in widening student participation in the local communities and empowering the young people of our generation to explore their talents and positively impact our society.

It has been a thrilling experience to give back to the local communities through volunteering. The gratitude I receive from people who have benefited from our volunteering is priceless. I will always be grateful for the opportunity of being able to give back in the little way I can. Hence, I will advise young people to give back to the local communities through volunteering and other means as this will brightens up their day. By getting involved in volunteering, you improve your personal skills and grow.

In the future, I intend to use the knowledge gathered as a law student as well as the

experiences gained as a Students Union leader to continue serving students, widening participation to local communities. Most importantly, I intend to continue to empower the youths of our generation to explore their potentials, discover their strengths and apply them in their everyday lives to continuously improve society.



Olawale Awoyinka

As a kid, I grew up watching a lot of late night movies. Sometimes, I had to stay awake for the late news with my dad before I could watch these movies. Gradually, I got drawn to issues and events in the Nigerian political and socio-economic terrain. My interest in news broadcasts grew and I would listen whenever my father commented on one issue or the other. Then I would ask him what the problem was but rather than provide answers, he would go to bed after the news frustrated with how the country was being run. I wondered why he couldn't go ahead to attempt to make a change. But then, I knew my dad couldn't run for an election because he was the average responsible parent whose priority was to cater for the immediate family. Politics was the least important item on his priority list.

Consequently, I decided at a very tender age to study Political Science and not Law, which my parents favoured. I felt it was important to have an educational background in Political Science if I was to run for elective office in Nigeria. I began to envision the day that I would make pro-people policies as reduce the anti-people policies that my dad always complained of and got angry about.

This has been my motivation for being a student representative in university right from my first year as a student. I represented the ethnic minority in my university at 2014 Black Students' Campaign ("BSC"). The BSC represents the largest constituency of lack students in Europe and students of African, Asian, Arab and Caribbean descent, at a local and national level on all issues affecting Black students.

Doing all of these while also studying is not easy, but the passion to stand up and speak

out for my fellow students has kept me going. I have also been motivated by the zeal to make a change that would be of benefit to prospective students in my university.

I strongly believe in one indivisible Nigeria that the heroes of our nation have stood and fought for. We, the youths, must choose whether to re-shape our future as we want it, or leave it as the older generation have handled it. Within our immediate communities, we can still determine who can best represent our interests even if we cannot all contest for positions.



Oluwadara Atewologun

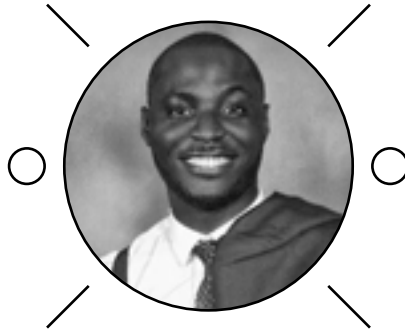
Success is the journey not just the destination. I began my journey by thinking differently. I left the comfort of my home and country for an experience beyond the prospects that Nigeria could offer me. I chose a course very different from what my family endorsed and as a result and people would often castigate me for acting more “unusual” than the average girl (although I always take this as a compliment). The friends I met, the knowledge I acquired, the opportunities and encounters that came my way all combine to make my journey an amazing adventure. However, it hasn’t been without difficulty.

I began a foundation course at the University of Warwick that was a totally different experience from secondary school days at Atlantic Hall College in Nigeria. Schooling in the UK was a culturally and socially challenging stage of my life and I initially felt like turning back. It took me a while to readjust as I realised that who I was yesterday wouldn’t be enough for today. Change was the one thing I needed. I achieved that by moving out of my comfort zone and stretching farther than I thought possible. This mentality equipped me well for life at Loughborough as I learned to develop my individuality and believe in possibilities. I testify that this mentality can take you far.

I was inspired to get involved with the Nigerian Society at Loughborough from my first year by a desire to help new Nigerian students fit into the university system. The goal was simple: To help them make a home out of the Nigerian society. My aim in the future is to restore hope where there seems to be none in any community of Nigerians that I find myself. We could lose hope in the present government of our country but there’s always better leadership that would lead us aright in the nearest future. I am motivated to lead, help and inspire future leaders through the smallest means, the Nigerian Society

in Loughborough University.

Beyond Loughborough, my dream is far bigger. And that's simply the advice I have you, dear reader: think beyond the limits the world presents and dream! I've found success is one journey. You don't want to wait till tomorrow to start yours.



Oluwatosin Nubi

“If you want happiness for an hour - take a nap; if you want happiness for a day - go fishing; if you want happiness for a year - inherit a fortune; if you want happiness for a lifetime - help someone else.”

This Chinese saying has been a source of inspiration to me, particularly in leadership. My motivation for assuming leadership positions is the opportunity to serve and help others

A friend once asked me: “Tosin, what really makes you happy?” It was an unusual question coming from that particular person, but I thought about it briefly and replied: “... seeing my family happy, helping people and seeing them do well are probably the obvious things that will put a smile on my face straight away”. I love to assist people in areas that I excel and it gratifies me to see those people do well in these areas as well. Consequently, I end up in positions where I am perceived as a leader.

My leadership experience has been very exciting. I have learnt how to convey my ideals to others through these roles. When you lead by serving, you are almost guaranteed success. I’m of the opinion that the challenges in leadership creep into the picture when you forget about the fundamentals of the role. For instance, when leading a group of people, your main agenda should be the people because your success as a leader is often gauged the success of the people you lead. In order to guarantee success and sustain it, you must learn to lead by example. In addition, it is important you assume roles of responsibility in areas where one is wholly interested. If you have 99% interest in what you are doing, the 1% percent lack of interest can be very cancerous to the group of people

you are leading.

To quote Michelle Obama, "...when you've worked hard, and done well, and walked through that doorway of opportunity, you do not slam it shut behind you. You reach back, and you give other folks the same chances that helped you succeed."

I was fortunate to have started a career with the London Stock Exchange Group in October 2014. I aim to continue assisting others as I pick up new interests and skills. For now, I dream of bridging the gap between the corporate finance world and the education system. Let's see how this plays out.



Opeyemi Soile

I currently hold a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Politics and Business from the University of Greenwich London and an Advanced Diploma in Administrative Management from the Institute of Administrative Management, UK. I am a young patriotic Nigerian actively who is involved in influencing and empowering Nigerians, especially the youth in the UK and in Nigeria.

Growing up in Nigeria, it was very obvious to me that the economic and political situation in the country was not what it ought to be. I knew that the lack of basic amenities and infrastructures such as power supply, good roads and many more was a deterrent to the desired growth we deserved in Nigeria. I was aware that something had to be done about bringing change and that I wanted to someday become a leader and influential figure in the Nigerian Nation. I desired to help bring about that change and put things right in the country.

Nevertheless, I also knew that if my desire and dreams were to come to fruition, I had to learn from the best. I needed to hear their stories. How they started. How they grew. How they built their empires. And I needed to hear it straight from the horse's mouth.

Consequently, at a very young age I had the opportunity to meet the late Chief M.K.O Abiola whose children I was friendly with. One day, I found myself in his private apartment together with his son. While in his bedroom, which had hundreds of awards and accolades pinned to a large section of the wall, I asked him several important questions about how he was able to become wealthy and influential. He said, "To be rich you need to work extra harder than your peers, persevere and give generously to those in need". He then mentioned that he was a philanthropist and that was why he earned many awards.

From that moment onward, I craved to be like Chief M.K.O Abiola.

Moving to the UK from Nigeria has been one of my best decisions so far. This is because I have been able to acquire first-class college and higher education that has helped to shape my positivity and intellect. Since moving to the UK, I have lived in London, which I believe is one of the world's most multi-cultural cities, met and worked with a lot of people from various cultures and backgrounds.

While in university, I was elected President of the Nigerian Students' Association for a little over 2 years and worked with the Students' Union. Thereafter, I was elected to serve as an executive in the Central Association of Nigerians, UK (CANUK). Interestingly, I was once called upon to manage an uncle's failing business in London while still studying at University. He had invested a lot of money in the business. It was the most challenging role I've ever played, as I had to make tough decisions. For example, I had to lay off over 10 staff, multi-task and cut cost drastically. In the end, it was a great experience for me as I was able to cultivate managerial and customer service skills.

I am presently on the board of directors of four emerging companies in media, education, sports and entertainment. I am the founder and Head Coordinator of Nigerian Students' Union, UK. I also do a lot of youth and community development work with the Nigerian and UK communities.

So far, I have received over 20 awards one of which came in June 2014 to my utmost surprise. I was named one of the 100 most outstanding Nigerians in the UK from 1914 - 2014 and received an award to that effect. For me, this was huge, bearing in mind that there were over 2 million Nigerians living in the UK at the time. More significantly, it was an indication that I was doing something right.

All said and done, I want to be a philanthropist. I want a situation whereby when people talk about Yemi Soile, they would refer to him as a great businessman, entrepreneur and someone who has done a lot for the community and for his generation. I want to be able to make a difference by informing, encouraging, and inspiring others. I want to leave a great legacy.

To the younger folks, I will say - never sit on an idea. If you have a vision or idea, act on it. Business is all about taking the leap and starting. Once you take the leap, then you can think about what's going to happen next. Like the saying goes "A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step". That first step is the most important thing. I end with my favourite quote: "If you're not making mistakes, then you're not making decisions."



Oyin Talabi

When I started my A-Level programme at Brentwood School, I was convinced that I wanted to be a Senior Prefect in my second year because of the respect and prestige that accompanied the position. I quickly realised I had a tall order especially as I had only one year to impress the school administration. I worked hard academically and balanced it with the sports I undertook. In addition, I was committed to attending all the meetings of the societies I joined such as the Science Society. I was also an active peer mentor, giving up an hour or more per week to mentor students. Having just come from Nigeria, not only was this my first time living away from home, getting accustomed to a new culture and environment was also a challenge. However, being a fast learner and a socially active person, I was not only able to succeed academically but also have a thriving social life.

In my first year at Loughborough University, I got involved in as many societies as possible where I met people from different cultures. At the end of my first year, I decided to take on the challenge of becoming more involved in the societies. For example, I became the Female Sport Representative of the Loughborough Afro Caribbean Society (ACS). I was also the Event Coordinator of 'Bright Futures' Society, which helps students with their career paths and also started the TEDx Loughborough. Apart from all that, I was also a project leader for Robogals Loughborough, which is an international, non-profit, organisation that aims to increase the number of females studying engineering at tertiary level.

These coupled with my Engineering degree meant I had to work extremely hard and manage my time effectively and efficiently. It was stressful but exciting and I loved every

moment of it. There were times I considered throwing in the towel but I desperately wanted to make a difference, contribute to the world and be remembered for it. My advice to anyone reading this is: Be bold and get out of your comfort zone because that is where the difference between ordinary and extraordinary lies. Make it a goal to stand out, push your limits. Whatever doesn't kill you will only make you stronger.

Also, these experiences you get by acting on your ideas will be forever useful, especially at interviews! It shows that you are not only hard working and self-motivated but you are also well rounded.

In the next 10 years, I plan to become a project leader with an international organisation, but for now I want to live each day to the fullest and make use of any opportunity I get.



Pamela Osanakpo

I have currently rounded off my master's degree programme in Management at the University of Loughborough UK. I completed my undergraduate degree in Marketing and Brand Management from the University of Derby, UK.

During the course of my study at the University of Derby, I noticed that there were quite a number of Nigerians and Africans on campus and decided to join an African or a Nigerian society. I attended my first Afro-cultural Society meeting and actually intended to run for a post in the Afro-cultural society. However, after the meeting I wanted something more than just running for a post. Therefore, I made enquiries on how to start a society and went through all the necessary formalities. Eventually, I set up the Nigerian society at the University of Derby in October 2011 and, alongside my team, hosted a "Come Chop" event that created awareness and attracted new members.

Overall, it was a thrilling experience with highs and lows. One challenging moment that stood out for me in particular was at our Nigerian Independence Four-Day event when our "fashion designer" pulled out a day before the show. It required team effort and out of the box thinking by my team and I to salvage the situation. The event eventually turned out to be a huge success.

I was president of the Nigerian society for two years and during my tenure, I learnt a few valuable life-lessons that will help to shape my plans for the future, which is, to own and manage my own business. Equally important are the people skills I have acquired in school. I believe this will help me in connectivity with strangers and friends alike in the future.

Finally, I would like to say that students who are going into the university for the first time should be actively involved one way or the other in extra-curricular activities on campus. I can't stress the importance of letting the university experience pass through you as opposed to just passing through the university. Good luck and have fun!



Solomon Oluwaseun Oyeniran

From a young age, it was my desire to study in the UK. When the opportunity came to take a Masters degree at the University of Hull in the UK, I decided to avail myself of it. Apart from having the overseas educational experience, I was determined to develop personally and professionally.

Upon arrival at the University of Hull, I was elected as the MSc Economics and Business student representative for the academic year. I also won a keenly contested seat as the postgraduate faculty representative for the Hull Business School (HUBS); hence, holding two renowned offices at the same time. These roles created avenues to coordinate Staff/Student Committee meetings at departmental level and sit on Academic Council meetings at University level. Through these platforms, I presented important issues about student welfare to staff and departmental heads and ironed out general issues such as the renovation of Hull University Library with top university officials.

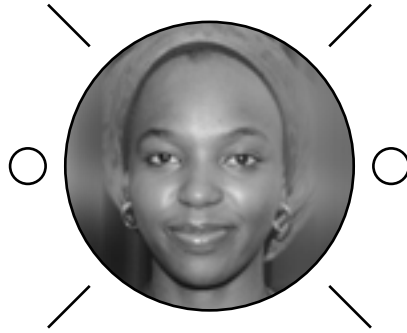
It wasn't long before I was appointed a member of the Quality Committee (QC) and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC). I assisted in the review of key documents and action plans from major student surveys in the university and proposed implementation strategy for HUBS. I actively participated in preparing a key document that helped HUBS receive the Triple Crown accreditation, which is held by only 1% of Business Schools worldwide. I was equally able to finish my MSc programme with a distinction and also got recognised as the best research student in the MSc Economics and Business category for that year.

Being a self-starter, I attribute most of my success in Hull to early and thorough prepara-

tion. But I still faced some challenges, notwithstanding. Some of the challenges include being able to properly reference my written assessments, coping with the strict timeliness in the UK and dealing with the very cold weather.

Since finishing in Hull, I not only lectured during my NYSC at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria, but I have also had the opportunity to serve as a research consultant for the university on many international projects, some of which were World Bank funded. I recently moved to Canada and got a job as a Lead Operations Officer at one of Canada's leading banks. I intend to continue to help my community in youth mentorship while preparing to undertake my PhD and then ultimately return to Nigeria to help in her development.

My candid advice to new and prospective students is to plan and prepare for everything. Always be prepared. Be focused. Always be willing to do something that will be of value to you in the future no matter how small it looks in the beginning. You will be surprised how far it will take you in life.



Yadoma Bukar Mandara

I never planned for nor envisaged many of the happenings in my life. I've always disliked being in the front of affairs or being seen in the forefront. During my college days, although I hardly sat in the front row, teachers always assigned me to do things for them. When I got up to the secondary school level, I was made Assistant Head Girl in SS 2 and much to my dislike, I was appointed as the Head Girl in SS3. My university years were calm as I wanted them to be; I graduated unnoticed; didn't participate in student unionism or anything related to school politics. During my service year, I bagged 2 awards (state and national) that earned me money - the NYSC/CBN Venture Prize Award. This incident shows how whatever is meant to be yours will be, and cannot be taken away from you.

The NYSC/CBN Venture Prize is a competition sponsored by the Central Bank of Nigeria where NYSC members across the 36 states write business proposals and the best 3 in each state are chosen, making a total of 108 from all the states. Then the three of the 1st positions in all the 36 states are picked for the national award. I won the state competition where I emerged 3rd. I was pleased with myself and moved on. But, some months later, I was contacted by CBN that I won the national award. And I thought this must be a scam! How could I have won the National award with a 3rd state position? After making some phone calls, I confirmed the veracity. I was later informed that I was marked down at the state level, but at the national stage, I was marked 1st. After my NYSC, I got a job immediately. I will share the thrills that came with this in the end.

In 2014, I was nominated to represent Nigerian Youths at the National Conference, turning out to be the youngest delegate. At the conference, I was also appointed Deputy

Chairperson of the Committee on Environment and served in other committees as well. I was also privileged to second the final report of the conference after one of the oldest members moved the motion.

My major source of motivation is my dad's inspirational prompts: "Always fight for your right"; "Women are like the steering wheels and steer to move the world"; "You can be whatever you want to be, don't get deterred because you are a woman". These are just a few of the motivational sayings he used to offer me.

Though I don't struggle to lead, whenever I find myself in the front I don't let anything drag me back. I try as much as possible to put all my energy to the task. I endeavour to burn my imprimatur on whatever I do and this aided me greatly at the National Conference and in my previous career.

Back in school, during my third year, I had a three-month stint as an ad-hoc staff in a village located in my dad's hometown. Many people thought I was crazy: some called my dad to ask him why he allowed his daughter take up such a lowly job as an ad-hoc staff. Nonetheless, I did my best on that job, and when we finished my supervisor said, "I will appraise you so well so much so that if there is an opening they will pick you, I admire your hard work". I didn't think twice of what he said; I just thanked him and appreciated the kind words. Now guess what? I was offered a job after my National Service in that same organization where I served as an ad hoc worker. Without an aptitude test, I was called for an interview, I went and I got a full time job! Wherever you find yourself in life, ensure that you leave your mark. You never know who is watching you!

I have a foundation dedicated to touching the lives of widows and orphans especially in Borno State, where they have suffered greatly as a result of the insurgency. I am also a blogger. I kept a running blog about the National Conference from inception to the last day. On my blog, I endeavoured to give a personal perspective on the various issues we dealt with at the National Conference and several other spinoff issues for the benefit of all young Nigerians.



Yinka Afolabi

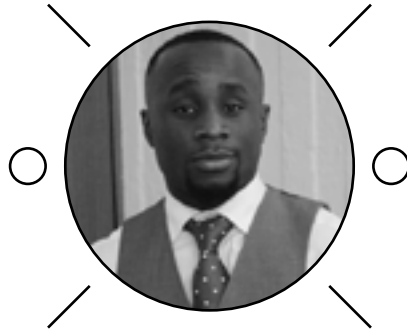
My motivation for taking up leadership activities comes from a variety of sources, both internal and external. I would say the most prominent factor is my mother. I once had a primary school teacher who used to discourage me, but my mother countered this by always telling me I was born to be great, and that I was born to be a leader. I've also been self-motivated because I see it as part of my identity. Whether on the football pitch or amongst my friends, I've always found myself behind the scenes, organising events.

I have assumed a few leadership roles, two of which are President of the African and Caribbean Society at my university, and a brand ambassador for Citi Bank. The highlights are the relationships I build through these positions, the way I get to develop insights on different kinds of people from different backgrounds, with different ideologies. Though speaking in front of many people could be frightening at times, it's thrilling to know that people listen to your words and take them seriously.

I also love being a team player because of the benefits attached to this. Being a leader you get to work with some of the best people and learn so much about yourself and about your team. However, leadership has many challenges such as demotivated team members, time management and self-management. From these challenges I have found self-management as one of the biggest. This is because of a leader's responsibility to put his followers first at the detriment of his own comfort. My advice to other youth leaders is to always keep their teams strong and motivated. This always would make your job easier. Finally, it's important you create time for yourself because you are only human.

Within the next few years, I would like to see myself working in the best financial insti-

tutions in the world, where I can learn transferable skills in order to live a self-employed life, preferably working in securities. My interests lie very much so in emerging markets, such as Nigeria, where I see myself investing in and giving back to local communities. I have a dream of building free schools in my parents' villages, Ikirun in Osun State and Ijebu-Imusin in Ogun State.



Yinka Akomolafe

My first leadership position that presented the challenges and thrills of leading, apart from captaining and heading various projects and sports teams during my earlier youthful years was as the President of the Afro-Caribbean Society at Loughborough University.

The motivation to run for presidency came from my deep urge to improve the levels at which Africans, Caribbeans and those highly interested in culture at Loughborough University enjoyed their university experiences while being open about their cultural heritage. Also, I wanted to make sure they could have a pleasant time, coupled with the best possible access to prosperous career paths and personal development.

Lastly, I am always keen to step out of my comfort zone and with such opportunity at my feet, also considering the current state of the society at the time, I knew it would be the perfect way to challenge and develop myself as a person. It was a great experience as it presented all types of moments, from thrills to challenges.

My most thrilling moment was when the team and I successfully reinstated the annual End of Year Ball as well as the newly formed event called Black History Week. Our most notable challenge was when our plan for a welcome party completely failed and we had to make last minute changes to find venue and food to host the members.

One piece of advice I have for people is this: Don't be scared to do what you believe in. The choices you make define who you become in life. I have just completed a year-long industrial placement at Nomura in project management and I have just started my first

entrepreneurial project with a style blog. The blog focuses on inspiring the everyday man with creating, developing and maintaining his style. You should all check it out: “yinkajermaine.com”.

This is an initiative I am working on whilst still schooling at the university. Therefore, I currently don't have the luxury called “free time”. I'm grateful that serving as the President of the Loughborough ACS has really inspired and developed me to always aim to do better.



Yinka Alli-Balogun

I never particularly strived to be a leader but often found myself in leadership positions. I easily notice gaps in projects and activities and I find myself filling them in order to improve the way things were done. I hope to be a good example of someone who gives his best effort even when the “best” doesn’t seem enough. I believe that applying genuine effort is the most important factor in leadership. If, at least, I can succeed at inspiring others to simply try, then I am successful. Fundamental to all this is the enduring belief that things do not have to be the way they are today. Change is actually possible. With such that at the back of your mind, you have to stand up and do something. Be the change you want to see.

Growing up in the Christian faith has taught me that the focal point is not self. In the Bible, a man called Nehemiah heard news about the terrible state of his home city and was deeply moved by it. Though he took time to pray and consider the situation, he eventually made a decision to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Just one man (backed by God) was a catalyst for the successful completion of such a great task. Though he first had to believe in himself, the needed people and resources eventually came into place in spite of much opposition and challenges.

Similar to Nehemiah’s vision, in my university days after returning from the exchange programme at the University of Toronto, we set about rebuilding the African Caribbean Society (ACS). Although the society was already in existence, we endeavoured to leave a legacy by complementing the work of those that ran the affairs of the Society and laying a solid foundation for those to come after our tenure. After many meetings, heated discussions, frustrations, mistakes and forgiveness, good things began to happen.

Indeed, these were responsibilities aside my academic commitments, dissertation and other deadlines. But then, I often found myself awake late at night happily doing ACS work and more importantly, watching people grow and benefit from the labour. That experience paved the way for other roles, particularly within the Xn Foundation, volunteering sector and the Church.

I met some amazing people along the way that inspired and continue to inspire me. Some of them are remarkably hardworking, some believe the impossible, some seem fearless, and some just believe in me. In my growing experience of leadership, I recognise the importance of valuing people: their time, effort and other resources. Also, it's instructive to never discount yourself because the things that move you do not move others. So, your vision and potential is unique. Do something with it!

“Now” is always the best time to start; the place is where you are; you are the resource. So stand up, reach out for and build something!

For me, the future plan has always been this: to be useful and make a positive impact wherever I am. In addition to the work of Xn Foundation and the DCLM Project, I hope to develop a diaspora project that would explore the journey and concept of “going home” to make an impact. The value of such a project to an individual and society could be immense. I hope to begin, starting with me as the subject and who knows where it will take me? Watch this space!

BEEN there & DONEY THAT LTD

BeenThere & DoneThat Ltd (a pan-African social enterprise) is committed to the development of the next generation of African leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals and academics.

We organise leadership and entrepreneurial development conferences to inspire, empower and motivate young Africans thus preparing them for an excellent future. Our Mission is to Inspire a new Generation of African Leaders and Entrepreneurs.

