

“How an International Education Will Help Me Make a Difference in The World”

Oluwatunmise Sodiya

University of Central Arkansas

“Darling, we might not be able to fund your undergraduate studies in the United States.”

When my parents said these words to me in my senior year of high school, devastated would be an understatement of how I felt. Nevertheless, what I did not do was ‘give up’. I had to prove my zeal to attain an international education to them in any way possible. I made sure my GPA was a constant 4.0. I participated in and won inter-school and national competitions for my high school. My energetic pursuit motivated them to work even harder just for me to get an opportunity to study abroad. Luckily, here I am today, earnestly pursuing my Bachelors’ degree in International Studies at the University of Central Arkansas. Every day, I feel so privileged and grateful to have been given a chance to attain an international education, and I have made a true commitment to face my studies squarely in order not to disappoint anyone.

I come from a country which, in all honesty, has rather low educational standards as compared to the United States. Back home, there is a large number of people living on the streets, and in abject poverty. My main goal is to transform my country, Nigeria, in years to come, and I felt that the dwindling standard of education there would not let me actualize my vision. I chose to major in International Relations (Studies) because of the way it helps to promote and share the diversity of world cultures in an increasingly dynamic international system. My sole mission is to elevate the status of my country in the global scene, and it all

begins with quality education. As the popular saying goes, “no man is an island”, the same applies to counties in the international sphere in the sense that countries need to correlate and cooperate with one another for the common good. In my junior year of high school, I participated in the 15th annual Nigerian International Secondary School Model United Nations (NISSMUN) conference which was a learning program that provided a platform for high school students to address several global concerns in a real-world context. Currently, I am in the Model United Nations Club, and this has really polished the way I understand world issues and ways to develop problem-solving tactics.

I have spent almost two semesters here at UCA, and I cannot even describe how much my stay here has improved me in various aspects of life. With the little time I have spent here, I have been able to learn and understand different ways of coping with vagaries of life. One particular quote that reminds me of why I am here and pushes me every day to keep doing what I do best is that of Nelson Mandela saying, “What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.” I want to make a difference! I want to make a difference in my country! I want to make a difference in the United States! I want to make a difference in the world! I want to “make my mark” in the lives of people around me even in the littlest ways. And I am very certain that I CAN! With my wonderful opportunity as an international student in the US, I will be able to gain knowledgeable skills, and set of attitude in order to give back to my society and to those who helped me in my journey.

One of my goals is to become the first female president of Nigeria, my country. It is always so disheartening when I hear or read bad news concerning my country, and so many things have been happening lately. Our present leaders do not seem to be able to handle

problems and various challenges the country is facing very well. One major reason for this is the leaders' and cabinet members' lack of good education. This is why I have traveled a long distance to acquire high quality education, so I can go back to Nigeria and make a positive change in the lives of my fellow citizens.

I really love how the educational system is set up here. Coupled with the fact that it makes accommodations for international students across the globe, the system also provides a learning environment for interaction and contribution. This really helps the students to see the views of different people, and equally gives them the ability to tolerate the opinions of other students. I was only 16 years old when I arrived at UCA, and whenever I told people my age, they would gasp in awe. They would tell me that I was so young, and I would ask, "Too young for what?" I have been able to prove to many people over the past months that age is but a number. I can never allow my age to determine how great I see myself in the future.

I would totally acknowledge my international education so far for the confidence being instilled in me, assuring me that I CAN make a change in the world with enduring hard work and vision. So help me God, Amen.