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The Biafra war stripped the opportunity of receiving an education from my father, I have learned from my father's life journey and found that I carry his resilience. Against all odds, he worked hard to provide for his children. Receiving an education was never guaranteed for me. Growing up in Lagos, my education was interrupted very often by my large family's financial challenges. This meant my secondary school education suffered because when my parents were unable to pay my tuition on time, I was dismissed from class as a result of my school's policy. I would never forget the first time this happened to me. I was overwhelmed with embarrassment when the bursar interrupted the lecture and asked me to leave the class, calling me a debtor. Although I worried for the fate of my academic success, the immense love I have for learning never wavered. That day, I stepped outside the classroom, stood by the window and with my notebook resting firmly in my hands, I continued to take notes, paying attention to every word my teacher said. Each time I was sent out of class, as discomfiting as it was, I attended my lectures through the classroom window panes. I still went to school, knowing I would not be allowed in class, because it did not matter where I was learning as long as I was learning. This mindset got me through the days when my feet would hurt from standing for many hours or when my peers would give me long pitiful stares. These experiences reminded me of my father and the challenges he faced. It taught me to value every educational opportunity given to me and to view every challenge as a chance to learn. I began to fully understand that although I may not have control over a situation, I have full control over my response to it.

Growing up in Lagos, similar experiences and witnessing inequalities drove me to find avenues to use my valuable education to help others. At a very young age, I knew of no better way to do this than to become a physician – a profession that allows me to combine my passion for life-long learning with science and caring for others. I knew the education system in my country would not be able to satisfy my intellectual and academic needs. My family still faced significant financial difficulties which motivated me to work even harder to obtain an international education that will equip me with the skills necessary to make an impact. I was fortunate to attend an international high school in the US (United World College USA (UWC USA)) with students from over 80 different countries and later Duke University. Over the past few years, I have received an extraordinary education that has combined academic challenge with an experiential, hands-on approach to learning. My time here has strengthened my resilience, borne out of my father's influence.

It was in the U.S. that I began to truly understand and appreciate the type of learning that comes from interacting with people who are culturally dissimilar from you. Being in a diverse community has been a transformative experience as I have encountered tenacious

groups of people with the common vision that our world can be a better place. Studying away from home and with students from various backgrounds forced me to question core ideals I had taken for granted and broadened my perspective of the world. I have been put in uncomfortable learning environments that has taught me to listen better, to be more open minded and to give people's perspectives the attention and respect they deserve.

Moving to the U.S. to study afforded me the unique opportunity to assimilate into its heterogeneous culture. Initially, I struggled to grapple with various parts of my identity: black, woman, African, Igbo, immigrant, minority. Over time, I have learned to embrace these parts that make me whole and use my identities to form deep interpersonal relationships with people from diverse backgrounds. My international education has also inspired me to always pursue more, with the better understanding that the world is an oyster that I must continuously explore. This has driven me to study arts and culture in France and Spain for a semester, volunteer to help at-risk youth in Cape Verde, conduct global health research in Uganda, found the first African Choir at Duke, teach high school students HIV/STI prevention in southern US and spend a week supporting local organizations in Cuba. These experiences, borne out of the lessons I have learned studying in diverse communities, have been an avenue for personal growth and allowed me to contribute meaningfully to my community, wherever I find myself.

As I prepare for medical school in the US, the next phase of my academic career, I am excited to see how I can continue to use my international education to make a difference in the world. My academic experiences abroad have molded and shaped me in a way that has allowed me to stay true to my core values while being open-minded to the world of possibilities. I believe that in order to make a difference, you must first be able to connect with those around you because it is not an individual venture but a community effort. As an aspiring physician, I plan to use the skills and attributes I have gained to continue to build camaraderie wherever I find myself and work to provide the best patient centered care to those in need.

While my childhood experiences have taught me to value education, my international education has shown me how to use it. My Igbo grandmother would fondly say, "mmadu mere gi emere mmadu" which loosely translates to "Do for others the good that has been done to you". I plan to use my international education to transform the lives of others in the same way mine has been transformed.