

Going Global: One Step at A Time.

“Dreams do come true”-this is the name of a song by Dolly Patron. I grew up listening to this melody from my grandpa’s old rusty radio cassette player. Even though I mumbled over the lyrics of the song, the message was engraved in my feeble heart, and it shaped an ambitious child with an unquenching dream of going global.

I was born in eastern Nigeria, bred in the west, schooled in the south and spent considerable years of my adulthood in the north. I was a local champion but my desire to go beyond the African giant was kept alive by my quest to conquer new frontiers of knowledge and my indestructible childhood dream of going global.

“Welcome to America!” Those were the three words I needed to reassure myself that I had moved from just a dream to a bold reality. As I read the lips of the elegant looking immigration lady at the Philadelphia International Airport, my eardrums went numb, and the world went silent for a second. The journey to “becoming” had just begun.

I had read that Americans are lovely people. The reception from my host was just a positive confirmation but then, the real struggle started right away! I could not hear Linda very clearly. Her speech was so fast, and the intonation was rather strange. I knew I had to find a way to hear and be heard. I decided to communicate with my heart and let my eyes, head and hands do the demonstration. That my head is still sitting on my neck is probably a miracle. I had to nod my head nearly every five seconds in all conversations to show affirmation, even in the classrooms, where you had to convince the Professors that you understood the concepts and that they were not just talking to themselves.

A day passed and the next. I had eaten salads and sandwiches for two days and I was longing for some “real food.” If you have met a typical Nigerian, you will know we like our food heavy. Have you heard of Eba and Egusi Soup? How about Fufu and Ogbono Soup? Maybe not, but you may have heard of Nigerian jollof. These were my cravings. I was already feeling like a floating balloon and if I did not get something to quench my hungry self, I could as well be a floating balloon. I found my way to one of the beautiful restaurants on Main Street. The breakfast menu was some long list of light meals which were not going to fly with me. “Can I have your lunch menu for my breakfast please?” It was not any different. I asked one more for the dinner menu and again, I was greeted with stark disappointment. I ended up ordering two servings each of their breakfast and lunch. Don’t blame me. We are heavy eaters.

I was now seated in the Trabant University Hall for the new graduate students orientation. I come from a multiethnic Nigerian society with about 250 ethnic groups and over 525 spoken languages but for the first time in my life, I was in the midst of people of several nationalities. As I listened to Dr. Lou Rossi, the Dean of Graduate College speak, it felt surreal that my global identity had been acknowledged. Once again, my childhood dream was rekindled. I now had a new citizenship- the global citizenship. I could not be any prouder that the University of Delaware afforded me this identity- my dream identity. Throughout that week, I put Nigeria’s Fireboy’s popular verse on repeat: “Naija Boy Wey Dey Go Foreign.”

“Let’s go see the football game this weekend, Davidson,” my new Bangladeshi friend, Abed says. Sure, I’m in! It was my first time watching American Football. I did not understand what was going on. I cheered when others cheered and booed when they booed. It was funny but then I began to understand the game. Guess who has never missed a home ticket this season! After the

game the UD Mascot- the YouDee gave me a hug! If the YouDee approves of you, you should be the proudest Blue Hen there is! Ever since then, I hold my head so high as a Blue Hen.

I had to trek to classes most of the time because I did not understand the bus network. For once, I saw a very organized public road system. In Lagos, there was no button anywhere for you to push to cross the streets. The formula was simple: look left, look right, look left again, then another right, look back, then look to your front and murmur a silent prayer for safety as you race to the other end of the street. Driving on opposite sides of the road was very common too. The culture was different here and it was a pleasant experience. At the red light, every car halted in respect, and I crossed the road majestically while muttering to myself: “a global citizen should not be running to cross the streets.” I hope I can bring some sanity to Lagos when I eventually return to Nigeria.

Now the cold is here. “Winter is coming,” they say! Well, for me, winter came the very first day I entered America. I sleep with two jackets on, shivering like a drenched bird. Then goes Linda: “Oh Davidson, it’s still very warm.” I look back at Linda in shock. I don’t know how to tell you this Linda, but this is the coldest I have ever had it in my life. I feel fresh out of the refrigerator and it’s just October. Can we postpone winter? Maybe yes but not my global dream. Because my time has come and there is no way I am letting it go. Thank you to the University of Delaware for giving life to my dream of going global. Now, I am going to change the world from here.