

NDUKA V. A. ANYANWU

The man

INTRODUCTION

Some men are born great, but some achieve greatness through hard work, determination and God's grace. The man, Nduka V. A. Anyanwu can be said to be one of the many people who fought and achieved greatness themselves. He did not allow his background to keep his back on the ground; so, is the case of so many other people who achieved greatness; though coming from a lowly background.

If life gives you a reason to give up, ensure to give life ten reasons to keep up. Greatness is not achieved by petty idleness or vain apathy and triviality. It is achieved through dint of hard work, determination and focus.

Importantly, one also has to prayerfully attract God's grace; this way, one's efforts, hard work, etc will pay off. Greatness is not meant for a particular set of people. We are all born in God's image and likeness; and if that is the case, then greatness is for everyone who aspires for it. The book of Wisdom says: "wisdom is moving about with its lamp, looking for those who are looking for it". In the same vein, greatness is moving about, looking for those who are looking for it.

It is therefore important to give a little chronicle of my life's experiences so far; this way, you can better appreciate the fact that you can still make it to the top. Ascending to the top demands every amount of humility, determination, focus, prayer and self discipline.

I have always maintained in different fora that "anybody can achieve anything". Yes, it all depends on your level of preparedness and determination.

The questions are:

Do you hunger for greatness?

Do you still believe in yourself and your dreams?

Do you also know that you need God's grace?

These and many other questions should be bugging your mind always.

MY EARLY LIFE

If there was going to be any limitation to what I could achieve in life, it would have been my family background. I happen to be one of those born in a very poor background. Life was not rosy at all, but God helped my siblings and I to overcome the challenges.

I am the third child and second son in the family of late Mr. Marcelinus Ugwuobikansi Anyanwu and Mrs. Agnes Onyekaozuru Anyanwu, nee Anyanwu. I hail from Umuanukwu, Okirika-ama in Umuokirika Ekwereazu, Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. It pleased God Almighty, the Essence, to give me form on April 11, 1978. I am blessed to have six

other siblings, making us seven children. By the grace of God, we are all doing very well in our various fields of endeavours; though we are yet to get to the zenith.

Looking at what God has helped me to achieve so far, one might be mistaken to think that it has been rosy all these years. No, it hasn't. The truth remains that one should not allow one's background to keep one's back on the ground. It was really tough growing up. My late dad used to sell fresh fish at Ama-Ogbonna, while my mum sold smoked (ice) fish at Cemetery Market, Aba; we were raised at Aba. So, I can authoritatively say that: “a bu m nwa Aba”. An Enyimba brought up (I was bred in Aba, Abia State). The city of Aba helped to mold me into the man I have become.

(Picture in Aba)

My six siblings and I, together with my parents lived in One-bedroom apartment; not like the modern well built apartments. But, the old fashioned one-bedroom apartment. So, you can imagine how it was, having nine (9) people under such an apartment. But, one pertinent thing was that we all had the zeal to break even, to survive, to achieve something great.

I used to help my mum in smoking and selling of fish at Cemetery market. Many at times, I hawked sachet (pure) water. This was even before I turned 10. I combined these jobs with my education; most often, I either skipped or went late to school.

EDUCATION

I had my primary education at Township Primary School, Aba. Later, I proceeded to Osusu Secondary School, Aba; though I did not finish up there. It was at Ogwe Ngwa Ihekwe Secondary School, that I wrote my SSCE in 1996. All these while, I combined hawking, menial jobs with my schooling. As I said earlier: “it wasn't funny”; not easy at all.

Although a lot of time went by, I still hungered for a higher education; a tertiary background. So, when I made some money, the thought of getting additional certificate came calling in far away South Africa. Hence, I bagged my nursing certificate at GEM Nursing College, Johannesburg, South Africa.

(Picture of secondary)

MY POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN ABA.

My hunger for survival started early in life. This made me to go and acquire skill/trade, after my secondary education at “John Sickers”; a pharmaceutical shop at Aria-Aria, Aba; owned by Mr. John Onukogu, from Ezinihite Mbaise.

Around 1997 during my apprenticeship, my dad enquired from my boss, Mr. Onukogu, how much was required for me to set up my own business. Mr. Onukogu told my dad that I needed a minimum of N100, 000 (One Hundred Thousand Naira) only to start up my own shop. At the end of my stewardship, which lasted for one and half years, my parents were able to raise N23, 000 (twenty three thousand Naira) only. With this amount, I went into business; I started life with N23, 000. I paid N8, 000 shop rent and was left with N15,000 (Fifteen Thousand Naira)

only. At this point, I sat down and advised myself that I needed to survive with the N15, 000. That's exactly what I needed; what every youth needs, the "will power" to succeed and get things done. This was happening in 1998.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

As one with the resolve to succeed, I had to explore every legitimate option in my line of business. That is called, innovation. One thing the youth is supposed to be known with, is "innovative ideas". I did not only sell in my shop because of the little sum I went into business with, I also had to take my wares to people that needed them; even in far away Nembe in Bayelsa state and Ogoja in Cross River state, among other places. I had to supply my products to them, despite the risks; because, I needed to expand and make profit.

(Picture to Bayelsa)

I was actually thirsting for greatness. For you to be great, you must hunger and thirst for it. I became such a workaholic that within one year, I was able to buy a motorcycle; which I gave out on hire purchase to a fellow youth. This was actually in 1999.

It is important to note that, "we cannot change yesterday, but we can do something to change our tomorrow for good".

Still in a bid to grow higher, I started nursing the intention of travelling abroad. The truth remains that I would have still made it big, even if I remained here in Nigeria. I had my priorities right, and was diligently on course. I planned my activities and I avoided detractors as well as temptations. Laziness of course, never existed in my "dictionary".

With the money from my business and the motorcycle, I raised fund to travel to South Africa in the year, 2000. I was only 22 then. As a YOUTH, I had this notion that life was better outside Nigeria. Many of our YOUTHS still live under this illusion. As matter of fact, there is this quest to travel abroad by many "uninformed" youths: which is soaring the statistics of irregular migration.

I had in mind of getting greener pastures in South Africa; all to no avail. Life became nasty and miserable. I slept along the streets of Johannesburg, with no siblings, no parents. Even the friend of mine that lured me to South Africa, hadn't any handwork. We were just roaming about and believing God for the next meal. Seriously, it's better imagined than experienced. As a matter of fact, the situation is the same in Europe, America, Asia, etc; except one travels for a defined purpose.

At a point, my family in Nigeria heard how I was suffering and started sending words across for me to come back. The situation was so unbearable for more than two years. I hawked, did menial jobs, etc just for a piece of meal. I remembered how far I got to at Aba within a short time and wished I had stayed back. Remember, I would have still made it even bigger, if I did not travel. Despite the pressure mounted by my siblings and parents to pull me back to Nigeria, I remained resilient; not because it was better there, but because I knew I could survive anywhere. I never liked to be associated with defeat. My resolve in life was intact; hard work and not quitting.

With the little money I was making, I saved, invested in small scale businesses; and today, it's all history. Remember, I avoided “get rich quick syndrome” that is rampant among our youths today. I shunned extravagant lifestyle and imbibed hard work. Being extravagant, especially when you are trying to rise on your feet could be suicidal. Every youth must shun unnecessary ostentatious lifestyle. Be conservative and focused.

(Picture in SA)

MY FAMILY

It is truism that a man begins to be a man, when he is married. Sometimes, we need to consider marriage, even with the very little success we have achieved. Family helps one to stay focused and shun distractions. It implants in one, high sense of responsibility and challenge of catering and caring for other human being(s).

Remarkably, I met my beautiful wife Onyinyechi on her birthday in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2001. She came for a programme in a church opposite my residence. As a young man, I approached her; though with genuine intentions. Our little chit-chat turned into a love affair. We got along real good. She actually hails from Soweto. Our statutory wedding took place in 2002. In 2007, we had our traditional marriage at her place in Soweto. By the grace of God, our church wedding was on December 29, 2008.

(picture of trad and white wedding)

Our union is blessed with 7 children; five sweet, beautiful daughters and two charming princes (sons). My family has helped to mold me into the man I should be. The love and joy are unequalled. Each day, my family inspires me to push higher and achieve more. Looking back and seeing them, gives me the courage to achieve more exploits. Caring and providing for my family is my responsibility; and my earnest desire is to be the best husband and father to my family members.

VALUES & ANTIDOTES

Values help to make us the man we become. We must not be “all comers”. I mean, we must place values that help us stay focused. Some of these values become our guiding principles, when strictly adhered to. They are:

* **Honesty:** This should be the watch word for every man who aspires greatness. The doctrine of “live and let live” should guide and shape our daily lives. Take what belongs to you and give your brother what is his. Never try to short-change or swindle your brother of his hard earned resources. Return material things or money borrowed from a friend/brother; learn to earn the trust and confidence of the people around you. Never take what is not yours. This helps you to keep your eyes focused on what is yours.

* **Focus/Determination:** Again, resilience and resolute spirit is what is needed to survive. You must develop a tough skin, if you must pull through life's challenges. Be conscious of the fact that roses are not without thorns. Tough people are made in tough times. So, you must learn to

focus on your goal and do not be distracted by harsh realities of life. Your background should not keep your back permanently on the ground. Rise up, brace up and face the challenge.

I had tough times growing up. As a child, it was not easy for me. While hustling at Aba, it was tougher. My dream of getting a better experience in South Africa became the toughest. In all these, my eyes remained on the goal. I knew somehow that I had to survive. I kept daring, until it paid off. You too can do same. Don't wait until your rich uncles or relatives support you; you can start doing something today .

* Time waits for no one: Time is another thing you must price with utmost importance. Do not waste your time watching TV all day, gossiping or engaging in trivialities. Spend your time wisely. Convert your time to money by acquiring education or skills.

*Humility & Respect: In a similar view, Humility and Respect are keys for anyone that aspires greatness. Stay cool. Nothing in life is worth showing off for. If you are haughty, then you have a problem. You must stay humble and have utmost respect for your elders and fellow human beings. With these, you can easily find favour before men and God.

The above have become my life guiding principles; they've become my values, my antidotes. You too can imbibe them or even more, if you aspire greatness.

SOME ACHIEVEMENTS

It is always good to count your blessings and name them one by one; this way, you'd be showing gratitude to God and even to the men that assisted you on your life's journey. NEVER BE AN INGRATE.

More so, recounting your achievements would help you to understand and learn better. It would bring you to terms with your failures and enable you to aspire even higher. It helps you have a clearer vision and perspective.

Despite my poor but humble upbringing, I have made some remarkable achievements. Like I said earlier, "you cannot change yesterday , but you can do something today that will change your tomorrow". Your future begins now. Obviously, people manifest in diverse ways. TWENTY FRIENDS OR MATES CAN NEVER PLAY TOGETHER FOR TWENTY YEARS. No youth who works hard to invest in his/her future will end up poor . Do not be afraid of failure, because failure helps us to learn and work better. It doesn't matter how you were born, that was yesterday; what matters is what you are and what you are doing, that is today . Although, I started with next to nothing; today, I can make bold to say that God has blessed my hustle.

One of my achievements in life is going to school. Initially, I never had hope of going to the higher institution of learning; but through God's grace, I have bagged a nursing degree from GEM Nursing College, Johannesburg, South Africa. I am also open and ready to learn more and go higher; hence, I'm always reading and researching.

What I can term my remarkable achievement is establishing my own firms and having people under my employ. I have to my credit, some firms registered and operational in South Africa and Nigeria. This is another way I wish I could help as many people and families as possible. Empowerment; either through job opportunities, skill acquisition or education.

I have also received some accolades as "Anyanwu N'etiri Oha", "Onwa N'etiri Oha", "Pillar of Education" and "Commander of Youth Empowerment" respectively. I have not arrived yet, but I am making a head way; hence, the need to carry you my fellow youths along. We must get there by God's grace.

To enable me give back to humanity; especially the youths and the vulnerable members of our society, my foundation, Nduka Anyanwu Foundation, was birthed.

NDUKA ANYANWU FOUNDATION

Nduka Anyanwu Foundation is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), established by my humble self, Nduka V. A. Anyanwu in 2019 and incorporated under the CAC in Nigeria. It is a non-profit organization, with the view to eradicating or at least, alleviating poverty to the lowest possible measure.

Nduka Anyanwu Foundation was born out of genuine concerns for many youths and families undergoing similar or worst situations like my humble family of those days. Since God gave me the power to overcome the challenges that surrounded my growing up, I vowed to help as many people as possible that face similar challenges.

I've also come to the realization that the best way to liberate the youths from poverty, is to liberate their mindsets; this I've been doing and will continue to do. One of the ways I could do this is through this medium, engaging the youths to read, think, act and grow. This is the reason this piece of writing and my book: "Future Without Youths" are written.

The history of Nduka Anyanwu Foundation, predates its official registration; as I have long engaged in philanthropic gestures prior to its formation. The motto of the foundation is: "Enriching Lives...".

By the grace of God Almighty, the foundation has positively affected over one thousand lives and empowered over five hundred youths and women, as well as over two thousand students; especially, at secondary and primary schools.

Some of the programmes and activities of the foundation can be found on www.ndukaanyanwufoundation.org

MY DEBUT INTO POLITICS

My intention to delve into politics was conceived when President Muhammadu Buhari made a derogatory remark against the Nigerian youths in 2018; describing them as "lazy". That remark

against us the youths, became a trigger to do something different and better for my country; at least, it developed my political consciousness. This I know that Nigerian youths are not lazy.

Again, the EndSARS protest that succeeded the lockdown/restrictions occasioned by the covid-19 pandemic gave me a message; which is: “the youths have woken up” or better still, “are waking up.

The above reasons made me to put on my thinking cap, to rationalize how best I can make positive impacts on humanity; beginning from my immediate community. These, coupled with advice, pressure and coercing by many of my constituents, friends and associates, I made up my mind to join politics.

Having joined politics, I deemed it first priority to salvage my immediate constituency, which is Ahiazu Mbaise.

My priority is to make Mbaise an education hub; through this, I would have succeeded in liberating my people from the shackles of ignorance, illiteracy and poverty. This is what I consider empowerment and wealth creation. This was the reason I, through Nduka Anyanwu Foundation, embarked on interschool debate, across secondary schools in Ahiazu Mbaise in 2021. It's on record.

It is important to note that development is measured by Human Development Index (HDI). With this, I can pull my people out of poverty and not by mere stomach infrastructure.

I hope to make ICT compulsory in the entire schools in Mbaise through Government assistance and the help of my friends across the globe.

Mbaise is going to produce software developers, and other ICT experts. The world's economy is anchored on ICT and I must let my people understand this.

It is no longer the business of sharing peanuts and making empty promises. Oil prices have crashed. The covid-19 pandemic must have opened our insights; so, we must consider options that can thrive in this complex and changing times.

MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE YOUTHS AND HUMANITY

In the words of John F. Kennedy, a former president of America: “think first what you will do for America and not what America will do for you”. I am one of those few people driven by the passion of what we can do for our people and not the other way round. Being human is not by accumulating all the wealth or getting all the favours from others, rather by sharing even the little you have with your fellow humans.

I feel saddened when I see youths roam the villages or streets without any meaningful engagements. In addressing youth restiveness and security challenges, it's wise for every right thinking person to marshal out ways of engaging the idle youths positively.

In my own little way, I wish to state categorically that I shall do my best to keep, at least the youths mentally and physically engaged. This, I hope to achieve through sports competition, during the dry seasons, culminating into the yuletides. Another way I hope to invest in humanity is by pulling the youths out of poverty. This is achievable through training, skills acquisition and building their mental capacity.

More so, women, children and the elderly will be captured. Modalities will be worked out through NDUKA ANY ANWU FOUNDATION on how best to achieve these.

I tasted suffering and would want to reduce poverty the much I can.

I believe that God is the only one that paves way. He, I know, will give me the enablement. I love my people and I wish them well.

Think and grow; you can do it.

Remember, there can't be a future without youth; wake up.