

2020 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

It Does Get Better

(Original)

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(Age 22, Nigeria)

Unknown future address, 15th of March, 2030.

Dear me,

I know that at the time you will receive this letter, you're just about to complete medical school. You're stressed out and tired. The journey has not been easy. I know that you're still confused about whether to settle for a career in Nigeria or to travel abroad in pursuit of "greener pastures" as many of your senior colleagues have. Deep down, your desire is to stay and use your gift, education and resources to serve your fellow countrymen but prevailing circumstances in Nigeria are frustrating you and threatening your dreams. I know because I have been where you are now. I know because I am you.

The seeming lack of care and neglect of our people by our leaders breaks your heart every day. I remember that sometime prior to the time you will receive this letter, you have stopped reading the news in Nigeria. It only made you feel hopeless and more distressed. Everyday seemed to come with some disheartening news; Boko Haram killings, Fulani herdsman attacks, religious and ethnic tension, hatred, poverty, etc.

I know how sad you felt whenever a patient at the hospital you are receiving your training in could no longer be cared for due to financial constraints. I remember the helpless faces of the relatives of those patients. I remember the boy who died at the children's emergency ward from complicated malaria. I know how shocked you were that people still died from Malaria and the worsened hopelessness you felt about Nigeria. I know how tense things are at the period you will receive this letter with mother about to undergo her second eye surgery.

I have good news for you. It does get better. Here, ten years from the time you receive this letter, we have great leaders who genuinely serve the people. They take education and health very seriously and devote significant time, energy and resources to these two

sectors. They see that a healthy country is the one that has the capacity to generate wealth for itself. They also believe that as Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world".

Insecurity and fear are no longer the order of the day as the Boko Haram insurgency has been defeated. Some of them surrendered their weapons and are currently undergoing rehabilitation.

The Fulani herdsmen have also been disarmed and many of them are now gainfully employed in cattle ranches all over the country. As a society, we are inspired daily to love and care for one another by our religious and political leaders. I believe we have never been more united as a country than we are now.

You are now a medical doctor. You have your own hospitals where people are treated not just as patients with a disease, but as people who need to be nurtured and cared for back to full health. You are also a health advocate and you engage actively in health education of the populace. Your passion for education has led you to establish an organization that provides and funds the education of children of the less privileged in the society and also orphans. You are happy and fulfilled. Mother is strong, healthy and loves life. I hope this letter encourages you to keep believing in your dreams and to keep hope alive for the future. It does get better.

Yours sincerely,
F.A. ISA.