

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize]

## **My Values**

(Original)

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I have been shaped by multiple values, but the values I cherish most, and which are ingrained in me are courage, stoicism and integrity. For as long as I can remember these values have been my guideposts to a fulfilling and impactful daily living.

I could not have written this essay without any mention of my mother. My pillar of strength. A God fearing woman who had to endure years of an abusive marriage, but never once slacked from the weight of raising four children alone, on a teacher's salary. That takes courage and stoicism, and these inspiring values are the foundation of my being. My mother taught me to "just do what you need to do and trust God to make it work". This lesson has helped me through difficult times and through my fears over the years: The fear of starting new phases of my life, fear of having to live with a monster of a father, and now, the fear that I may never be fully ready for God's purpose for me. Inspiration has the power to elevate us beyond our mere circumstances, and I believe that everybody deserves someone who can be an inspiration to them the way my mother is to me. As a pro-feminist, I wish to use the foundation that I have to offer young girls and abused women the support they need to become stoic and courageous. For it takes courage and stoicism to find fulfillment and live your authentic self.

My mother has always tried to instill integrity into all her children, but when you live in a country like Nigeria, where corruption and incompetency is a constant slap in the face, you cannot help but be drawn into that vortex. The reason integrity has stayed with me, is because I have always felt the need to be different. To be the change I want to see. I remember a conversation I had with a classmate a few years ago. She was bragging to me about the fact that her parents sold children for a living. Yes, bragging! Apparently selling children is a "lucrative business." After that unsettling conversation, I did a little research

and discovered that child trafficking in Nigeria has been ongoing since before I was born, and grows worse every year. Young girls are kidnapped and hidden in fake orphanages and private hospitals. These girls are then molested and forcefully impregnated, and the babies are sold to anyone who can meet the prices. I also discovered from my research, unsurprisingly, that child welfare ranks least amongst the Nigerian government's priorities. It was that moment I made a pledge to myself, to be an incorruptible force of change in my country. I have since utilized the various social media platforms to create awareness about child trafficking, but there is a bigger plan. I am currently majoring in petroleum and gas engineering at the University of Lagos. My plan is to enter the oil sector and gain wealth and connections so as to start a project of creating institutions for underprivileged children across Nigeria. These institutions will focus solely on providing a safe haven for the rehabilitation, growth and development of disadvantaged children. I know this plan will, in the long run, address more than just child trafficking because the truth is, today's generation and the future generations are our only hope for a better Nigeria.

"People have no greater calling than to serve the greater good of human kind." This is a wise statement from Japanese philanthropist and entrepreneur, Dr. Kazuo Inamori. A calling is the urge to help people through your God given talent, and many people, like myself, have been blessed to know their calling. However, I believe it is not enough to just know your calling, you also have to HONOR it. And honoring your calling requires having fundamental values. It requires choosing courage over comfort; choosing what is right over what is easy. I having a calling to be a force of change in my country, and my values are how I intend to stay true to that calling.