



Favour Ikedife

There is a saying in *Ibo* that states: "*the bottom portion of the pot is where the sweetness of the food lies.*" This essay is not technically the bottom portion of my pot rather, it is the entire dish and I can guarantee that it is the sweetest.

Migrating to a new country is far from easy. You ask yourself to burn every bridge between you and your past, struggle with self-identification, and try to cope with the hassles of a new world. One day, you realized that the bridge burnt was an illusion. Whatever you tried to run from has always been with you, and your roots are more in-depth than the shallow ends of a river.

I was blessed with the fusion of industriousness, creativity, and curiosity of a newly landed immigrant. I flourished, despite my indecision on which talent interested me most. I had a passion for the arts, science, and business. Unfortunately, I was constantly bullied in school due to my distinctive Nigerian accent, thus, inhibiting me from interacting with my peers. I was always alone, continuously finding myself swimming in my imagination or trying to alter reality through art. I then became a jack of all trades but sadly master of none, struggling to keep up with the expectations of my parents. All this led to confusion and anxiety. I had no choice but to blend into this new world.

My family and I were once legally unauthorized to work, So I financially supported by sewing clothes for people and worked in factories with my parents. We live our day-to-day lives in fear of being deported or detained, so most of our activities are done in the confinement of our home, school, and church. Because of this, I couldn't contest in national art and math competitions and even physically protest on pressing issues like Climate change, immigration injustice, and the devastating human trafficking. I, therefore, sort to using social media to do all these while keeping my identity as discreet as possible. The Lord is highly against fear, but also, he believes that everything is done in season and should be done with wisdom. I believe that all my activities should be done on a local level where I am under the protection of the city laws. I have come to realize that fear isn't just an obstacle but also my driving force, the heat for my dish.

There is a quote that states "*if your dreams don't scare you, it isn't big enough*"- UNKNOWN. My plans scare the ribs out of me. People ask me how I persevere through tough times and how I manage to find hope even when it seems like all hope is lost. Sometimes I would answer them by saying: It is by the grace of God, which is true. But deep down I know that it is something else. It is fear. **Fear**, not anger, envy, nor gratitude for the marvelous generosity of my parents for bringing me to this great country, it is fear. Fear that whatever I am running from (poverty, hopelessness) will catch up to me and devour me the moment I stopped thriving and I will die regretting not being able to overcome this fear of mine. Every hero, legend, and warrior throughout the course of history have a driving force and a weapon behind their success and legendary exploits. And every human deserves a canon which provides the enablement to achieve the unimaginable, mine is FEAR. My job right now is to equip myself with the necessary things (education) needed for me to overcome every obstacle that will deprive me of succeeding. W.E.B Dubois believed that "*there is no force equal to that of a woman determined to rise*" and I couldn't agree less.



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With that, I finally became the valedictorian of my class with a cumulative grade point average of 3.9/4.0. But there was a need for adjustment. The way for me to properly adjust in life was to accept the differences and acknowledge the similarities between myself and this new world. I found myself interacting with people of various backgrounds and enjoying the delectable but confusing taste of American dishes. My favorite would be Wendy's chicken nuggets. There is something unordinary about it. Every single bite transports me to another magical realm. I just hope that the aftereffect would be as delicious as the first bite. Finally, I found peace in myself and with my surroundings. I also came in terms with my growing obsession with Wendy's Chicken nuggets- five pieces of nuggets a week.

People sometimes forget that the bottom part of the food is still part of the food. This also goes to a story. People tend to filter out and believe the good and pleasant portion of a story leaving the other parts for God-knows-who. My school mates are no different. They tend to see and accept the sugar-coated part of my life and ignore the obstacles that had to overcome to be where I am today. I told them that I didn't just become the valedictorian; I first had to understand the importance of education due to unfavorable life experiences. I didn't become a good runner overnight; I once had to walk a mile and more just to get an education. My struggles and challenges led to my current day success, and they shouldn't be ignored.

My advice to anyone migrating would be; truth comes from within and the greatest virtue is truthfulness to oneself. With the truth, one can persevere through any hardship of this life. Everyone has the bottom portion of the pot, the scraps, the proportion of their story that wants to be ignored. But sometimes one needs to be reminded that they are as important as other parts of the story. No matter how burnt and discouraging a part of your story might be to you, it still needs to be heard. It doesn't have to be the sweetest for it to be acknowledged. "One doesn't know how beneficial the scraps of a person's food or story can be to another person. Also, if we tend to focus only on the bottom part, this might lead to stereotypes. So, tell all your story, don't leave any space for people to wonder or assume so that they can at you holistically. The chef, the ingredients, the amount of heat, and even the type of pot matters. Everything matters, everything about you matters and no one should take it for granted.

Although, I have experienced poverty, been severely bullied, struggled with my sense of identity, and even faced forms of social injustice. But I also have some notable achievements, a family that cares, and hope that my accomplishments would one day be a delicacy to the entire world.



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