

A PATH TO HEALING: MY PURSUIT OF NURSING

My name is Bunni. I am a young man from a family of two boys, my brother and myself. My father, from a large family of ten, did not attain higher education due to financial constraints that left him unable to secure a good job that could comfortably provide for us in Nigeria, an undeveloped country. Despite his intellectual abilities, I watched him struggle daily, doing menial jobs, and coming home with an income that barely sustained our family.

My mother, on the other hand, received some education. Coming from a large family too, she could only pursue higher education after getting married and having children. She attended a College of Education part-time while caring for two young boys and eventually earned her degree. However, by the time she completed her education, she had passed the prime employment age in Nigeria, limiting her job opportunities to second-rate private institutions. These jobs paid her less than \$10 monthly, equivalent to today's naira-to-dollar exchange rate. After factoring in transit and other work-related expenses, that meagre sum was too small to support our family. Eventually, she decided to stay home and organise private tutorials for young students, allowing her to help my brother and me with our schoolwork.

Despite my family's challenges, we held firm to the belief that academic excellence and success were the keys to overcoming poverty. As I entered secondary school, this belief deeply motivated me. I was determined to work hard and stand out academically, which led to my exceptional performance in the West African School Certificate examination. During this time, my interest in health and the sciences grew. My aunt, a nurse practitioner, and her family became a source of inspiration for me. Witnessing her dedication and compassion for her patients fueled

my passion for nursing. When I had to choose between Science, Arts, or Social Science classes, I quickly and decisively chose the sciences.

In 2015, during my school years, I applied for and was appointed the laboratory prefect. My role involved smoothly running the laboratory and assisting the teachers when needed. This experience allowed me to put classroom knowledge into practice, and I became proficient in using laboratory equipment. A memorable experience was working in the laboratory with the chemistry teacher on a project. The aim was to prepare chemistry students for the West Africa examination laboratory experiment. I was responsible for setting up equipment for the titration experiment. So, I ensured all materials were available and in the proper order. I took the initiative to explain the procedures to my classmates. At the end of the experiment, this project significantly deepened my appreciation for the practical applications of chemistry, igniting a passion and enthusiasm for the subject I carry to this day. It also sharpened my teaching skills as I explained concepts in a way my classmates could easily comprehend. I still remember Mr. Okafor's handshake; my pride and a sense of accomplishment remain with me.

A proverbial phrase says, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." I've embodied this mindset throughout my life. After graduating from secondary school in 2016, I faced the challenge of being unable to attend college due to Nigeria's high education costs. But should a young man give up because of limited resources? Rather than quitting, I embraced the mindset my parents instilled in me. I began volunteering at my local religious community, gaining valuable experience, including CPR and First Aid training. This exposure to basic medical knowledge and its life-saving potential in emergencies deepened my passion for nursing education.

Another benefit of volunteering was the information I received. In 2022, Berea College came into the discussion. A coworker told me to research the school. I meticulously researched the school, delving into its history, academic programs, and campus life. I even searched for YouTube videos explaining how life was on campus, and I was amazed. I anticipated applying, but tragedy struck—my mother suffered a fall, hitting her head, and was hospitalised for a long time. So, I transferred the skills acquired from volunteering and became my mother's immediate carer. I was responsible for hospital runs, helping with her physical therapy, and managing her medications. Mother's illness exposed me to the inadequacies and failures of the Nigerian health care system; there is a commonly shortage of staff, unprofessional medical practitioners, and outdated equipment.

Moreover, I became even more determined to pursue Nursing Education at Berea College. I witnessed my mother being misdiagnosed and disregarded by doctors and nurses. My mother, who suffered from traumatic brain injury, was mistreated and neglected by medical professionals. Sometimes, we begged for attention from the medical staff to help my mother. One day, a doctor callously told my mother, "You will remain like this forever, and there's nothing that can be done except rely on medication and a wheelchair for the rest of your life." These experiences profoundly affected me and my younger brother. The way the news was delivered sent my mother into depression, and I felt utterly helpless. However, this convinced me that good nursing is about more than just technical skills; it's about making vulnerable people's lives easier. Now, the question is, what is the way forward? I look behind to where I was a few years ago; I want to become a nurse. I do not want to be trained in Nigeria; hence, I am applying to Berea College.

After completing my Nursing Education at Berea College, I plan to return to Nigeria and contribute to improving the Nigerian healthcare system. I will use the experience and knowledge gained in the U.S. to change attitudes and practices, influence health policy, and support programs that make quality care available to vulnerable groups. Continuous learning will be one of the cornerstones in my career path, and as such, I plan to attend workshops and conferences and pursue advanced certifications to keep up with emerging trends in medicine.

My long-term goal is to specialise in neurotrauma nursing, focusing on the care of patients with traumatic brain injuries and other neurological conditions. My personal experiences with my mother's TBI have inspired me to pursue this field. To achieve this, I plan to obtain the Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse (CNRN) certification, which will allow me to deepen my expertise in managing neurotrauma cases. By becoming CNRN-certified, I can offer specialised care, helping patients through some of the most critical and vulnerable times in their lives in an area of nursing that fits my interests and strengths. I will be equipped to help in the field lacking so much attention and help raise the standards of care.

Finally, I want to be a nurse who expresses Berea's inclusiveness and social justice spirit, caring for and serving the global family through support for improved access to healthcare services and providing quality, compassionate care. Berea College represents the ideal environment where these qualities can be thoroughly fostered.