

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

My name is Lynn Njeri, and I am 21 years old. I was born on May 29th, 2003, at Naivasha Hospital in Kenya, as the eldest in a family of four children. I wouldn't say I was born into a struggling family but rather a humble one that lived well within its means. My mother has been a teacher for 21 years, and my father is involved in agribusiness as a horticulturalist. We've always had just enough—no more, no less.

We lived in Naivasha since I was born but moved to Thika shortly after. We have moved around though but all within the environs of Thika and we currently reside in Maki estate, Thika. As a young woman navigating the complexities of university life, I study at Dedan Kimathi University. Throughout my life, I have encountered moments of triumph, adversity, and self-discovery. Through this autobiography, I hope to share my experiences, challenges, and aspirations, offering insight into the transformative power of education and the pursuit of one's dreams.

I am passionate about leveraging my education to make a positive impact in my community. My journey has taught me the importance of resilience and perseverance. I look forward to contributing to the field of agribusiness, following in my parents' footsteps while carving out my own path.

Early Life and Education

My childhood was a time of innocence and wonder, marked by the simple joys of family, friends, and exploration. By travelling to different places, I was surrounded by a diverse array of cultures, languages, and traditions, each offering its unique perspective on the world. From the bustling streets of the city to the tranquil beauty of the countryside, I reveled in the diversity of my surroundings, finding inspiration in the sights, sounds, and experiences that shaped my early years.

As the eldest sibling, I was blessed with the love and guidance of my parents who instilled in me a deep appreciation for education from an early age. From the moment I first set foot in a classroom, I was filled with curiosity and wonder, eager to learn and explore the world around me. My comprehension in the early stages of my life was remarkable, and I picked up reading and listening faster than the rest of my classmates, giving me an edge in my early academic endeavors. With the support of my family and the encouragement of my teachers, I embarked on a journey of discovery that would shape my life in unimaginable ways.

Most of my early years were a blur, but as I reached the age of six, I began to gain greater comprehension. My parents often joke that I was their most conscious child at that age compared to my siblings. The critical thinking and consideration I exhibited surpassed their expectations, and my speech during those years was notably advanced.

I attended a local private primary school, Thika Memorial Primary School, while we were still living in Thika and was later transferred to boarding school in Nyeri called Nyeri Good Shepherd Academy where I completed my primary school education. It was there that I discovered my passion for learning, excelling in both academics and extracurricular activities. I enjoyed competing with my fellow students, and it thrilled me to see myself leading the pack simply by putting effort into my studies. Some might say I became cocky with my success, and I would agree—for shouldn't one have the right to be proud when they surpass their own expectations?

Apart from excelling in my studies, I engaged in extracurricular activities such as football and swimming, but only during primary school. Playing sports helped me clear my mind and exert the energy I stored up during school days. It was exhilarating. As a young girl, I also loved reading fictional books; my imagination would light up as I visualized the scenarios I read about coming to life, with characters dancing and conspiring, making sarcastic jokes, and more. After primary school, I struggled to find time to read as many books as I did before, although I'd still pick up a piece of literature here and there.

Outside of school, I found great satisfaction in spending time with my siblings. My brother Ernst was ingenious; he loved coming up with inventions and plans and would always drag my cousin and me into his schemes, which we loved. My cousin Yvonne, who was more like a sister and grew up with me, was very imaginative and frank in her opinions. Looking back, I think spending so much time with them shaped my attitude toward others and taught me how to relate to people. They were a duo that challenged each other intellectually and physically, and to this date, I still draw inspiration from them.

When I finished primary school after scoring a remarkable 402 in my KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education), I was called by the government to attend Maryhill Girls High School in Kiambu County. There, I continued in the same spirit I had as a little girl, striving to be among the top scorers in my school. I took on leadership roles, first as a class captain and then as head of academics.

In high school, I encountered many students from different cultures and backgrounds, which challenged my interpersonal skills. I met all sorts of characters, some a bit odd and others more composed. From all this socializing, I forged many long-lasting relationships; some of my best friends today are those I trust with anything and everything, including helping me make crucial decisions in my life.

Academically, I developed an interest in literature—stemming from my earlier love of reading—and an interest in the sciences. High school was a whirlwind of activities and responsibilities, but in the end, I managed to work hard enough to achieve a B in my final KCSE (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education) exams.

Mentorship Experiences

Throughout my journey, mentorship has been a cornerstone of my growth, profoundly influencing my personal and academic development. From an early age, I was fortunate to encounter individuals who offered guidance, wisdom, and encouragement, shaping my path in ways I could scarcely imagine. One of the most significant mentors in my life was Michelle Strong, a trailblazing woman who inspired me with her unwavering commitment to pursuing her passions. Despite facing resistance from her family, Michelle chose to follow her dream of studying IT abroad, securing a scholarship through sheer determination and self-belief. Her story was a beacon of courage and resilience, prompting me to reevaluate my own aspirations and affirm my commitment to a career in literature and technology. Additionally, the support and insight from my professors at Dedan Kimathi University have been instrumental in my academic journey. Their constructive feedback and encouragement helped me navigate the complexities of my field, pushing me to achieve excellence and explore new frontiers. Outside the academic sphere, my involvement in community projects introduced me to mentors who provided practical wisdom and career advice. These experiences taught me invaluable lessons about leadership, perseverance, and the importance of giving back to the community. Each mentor, with their unique perspectives and experiences, has contributed to my growth, instilling in me a profound appreciation for the power of guidance and the impact of supportive relationships. Their influence continues to resonate in my approach to challenges and opportunities, reminding me of the importance of mentorship in shaping a fulfilling and purposeful life.

Choosing a University

As I approached the final years of high school, the time came to make one of the most important decisions of my young life: choosing a university. Guided by my aspirations and fueled by a desire for academic excellence, I embarked on a journey of exploration and introspection, seeking to uncover the path that would lead me to my true calling.

For many students, the prospect of choosing a university and a course of study can be daunting, filled with uncertainty and anxiety. I had to do some deep internal digging to discover what I wanted to do for the rest of my life—or rather, what I wanted to give me the momentum that would impact the rest of my life. I read books and consulted my parents, seeking inspiration. Honestly, none of that really helped. It was only after a visit from my mentor, a young woman named Michelle Strong, who was two years ahead of me in her studies and had been my mentor since primary school, that I truly decided.

Michelle had stopped by to say goodbye before her departure. You see, Michelle was going abroad to study IT, a course her parents didn't want her to pursue. In fact, they were so adamant in their decision that they refused to pay for her tuition. They wanted her to study medicine; her grades after high school would have qualified her for both courses, but she chose to stay true to herself. She did her research and found a scholarship that enabled her to study what she wanted—her passion, not her parents' aspirations. Her visit reminded me of her entire backstory, and I was catapulted into analyzing myself yet again. More soul-searching led me to discover that I truly appreciated literature and aspired to be an author one day. However, in the current economy, a career in writing with no initial capital would yield little or no fruit. Besides literature, my other interests were in technology.

As I navigated the maze of options and possibilities, I found myself drawn to the esteemed University of Nairobi, a beacon of learning and innovation in the heart of the city. With its rich history, diverse academic offerings, and vibrant campus life, it seemed like the perfect fit for my aspirations and ambitions.

However, as fate would have it, circumstances led me to choose Dedan Kimathi University as my alma mater. While it may not have been my initial choice, I soon discovered that Dedan Kimathi University offered its own unique opportunities and advantages, from its close-knit community to its specialized programs in my field of interest. With an open mind and a spirit of optimism, I embraced this new chapter in my academic journey, eager to see where it would take me.

Adjusting to University Life

Stepping onto the hallowed grounds of the university campus for the first time, I was filled with a sense of excitement, anticipation, and apprehension for the journey that lay ahead. Amidst the hustle and bustle of orientation week, I grappled with the challenges of adjusting to a new environment, forging new friendships, and balancing academic demands with newfound independence.

As I navigated the labyrinth of lecture halls, libraries, and dormitories, I found solace in the knowledge that I was not alone on this journey. From the friendly faces of my fellow students to the supportive guidance of my professors, I quickly discovered that the university was more than just a place of learning—it was a community, a home away from home, where I could grow, thrive, and pursue my dreams. I grew to love the environment and became comfortable in it, seeing it as the grounds that would truly ready me for the adult life I was about to begin. I viewed it as a platform to train myself to manage the situations I would encounter later, and that prospect excited me.

Academic Challenges and Achievements

University presented a new set of challenges, testing my intellect, resilience, and resolve. From demanding coursework to rigorous exams, there were moments when self-doubt threatened to overshadow my aspirations. Yet, with unwavering determination and the support of mentors and peers, I persevered. I pushed myself beyond perceived limitations, embracing the pursuit of knowledge with a fervent passion. As the years unfolded, I celebrated academic achievements that surpassed my wildest dreams, from earning top grades to receiving prestigious scholarships and awards.

Juggling the coursework and newfound independence, I initially struggled to prioritize effectively. Suddenly, I was responsible for monitoring my habits and ensuring I enjoyed the slice of life I had been granted while also performing exceptionally well in my academic assignments, CATS, and exams. It was a lot to handle for a girl who had just left high school and the watchful eyes of parents and teachers. In the end, I learned to distinguish what was important from what could jeopardize the future I had worked so hard to establish.

Aligning my actions and habits with my goals was not easy, especially in an environment where many students had misplaced objectives—some were there simply to spend their parents' money and enjoy freedom without impending obligations. The transition from high school to university was not without its challenges. The academic rigor of university-level coursework pushed me to my limits, demanding a level of critical thinking and analytical skills that I had not yet fully developed. Yet, with each obstacle I encountered, I found new reserves of strength and determination within myself, pushing through the challenges with a sense of purpose and resolve.

Beyond the confines of the classroom, I sought enrichment and fulfillment through a myriad of extracurricular activities. From joining student clubs and organizations to volunteering in community outreach programs, each endeavor offered a unique opportunity for personal growth and exploration. Whether participating in debates, organizing cultural events, or championing social causes, I found purpose and belonging in activities that extended beyond academic pursuits. These experiences not only enriched my university experience but also fostered lifelong friendships and memories.

I especially loved engaging in various activities because they gave me a chance to meet new people—some in the same field of study with similar ideas and interests, and others with entirely different perspectives. It thrilled me to have the opportunity to learn from so many individuals from different walks of life at once.

In my second year, out of a spirit of spontaneity, I ran for a leadership position in the student government. Navigating the murky waters of politics was not for the weak. While running for Chair of Finance, I saw how people use others to gain power and how money controls the greed of others, leading them to make decisions that do not benefit them. It was disheartening to see that respect and goodwill earned from the public could not compare to what backhanded deals

could achieve, even on a university campus. I lost significant resources financing my campaign and still lost because my pockets were not deep enough.

Throughout the rest of my university journey, I found myself drawn to a diverse array of extracurricular activities, each offering unique opportunities for growth and exploration. From joining the university debate team to volunteering with local community organizations, I embraced every opportunity to expand my horizons and make a positive impact. I especially loved being part of the debate team, which felt like a continuation of my high school experience, only with more complex and thought-provoking topics. During holidays, I volunteered at Parklands Baptist Church, seeking wisdom from experienced individuals while contributing to society.

In my first year, I worked in the children's Sunday school department, helping with planning, designing, and printing materials for the kids. I learned how to use tools like Canva and Blender to design posters and learning materials. These skills later proved useful in my university studies. In my second year, I volunteered in the mission department, traveling to orphanages and homeless shelters to lend a hand and take stock of their needs. On days we didn't travel, we distributed donated items to needy individuals and families. These experiences taught me to appreciate what I had and recognize the efforts my parents made for my siblings and me. I gained valuable connections from my volunteer work, some of whom became mentors and sources of knowledge.

There is one activity I immersed myself in during the long holidays of my first semester that I try not to mention often because of social stereotypes and to avoid too many questions, but I am immensely proud of myself for engaging in: I volunteered at a local animal shelter part-time. I have always admired animals and been fascinated by their behavior, care, and different breeds. I wanted to learn about them and beat the stereotype that young women are only interested in domestic pets without understanding their deeper needs and complexities. Moreover, I wanted to adopt a pet in the future and take pride in knowing how to care for it inside and out. I decided to volunteer at the shelter, going there after my church volunteer work. It was challenging for me at that age, given that shelters can be emotionally demanding, but I believe my prayers kept me strong.

I will never forget the day they brought in a beautiful Golden Retriever. Despite not being my favorite breed, the beauty of the dog was undeniable. Golden Retrievers were among my favorite breeds, and I hoped to own one someday. The staff at the shelter had taken a liking to me and were enthusiastic about showing me the intricacies of animal care. I was overjoyed. When I felt I had learned enough about animal behavior and care, I stopped going to the shelter, but it was a lovely experience overall.

All in all, every extracurricular activity I engaged in contributed to building my character, instilling crucial morals and values, and molding me into who I am today.

Impact on My Journey

Mentorship has profoundly impacted my journey, providing me with invaluable advice, support, and wisdom that have shaped my decisions and development. One of the most influential figures in my life has been Michelle Strong, a mentor whose guidance and resilience inspired me to remain true to my passions. Michelle's story of overcoming familial opposition to pursue a career in IT taught me the importance of following one's own path despite external pressures. Her advice to stay committed to my goals and not to be deterred by obstacles gave me the confidence to choose a career in literature and technology, fields I was deeply passionate about.

In addition to Michelle, the support from my professors at Dedan Kimathi University played a crucial role in my academic development. Their constructive feedback and encouragement helped me navigate complex concepts and improve my critical thinking skills. One professor, in particular, provided me with practical advice on applying theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges, which was instrumental during my internships. Their wisdom helped me understand the importance of blending academic learning with practical experience, a lesson that proved invaluable as I embarked on various professional endeavors.

Moreover, my involvement in community projects introduced me to mentors who offered practical wisdom and career advice. These mentors emphasized the significance of networking, effective communication, and the value of hands-on experience. Their support helped me refine my professional skills and broaden my perspective on career opportunities. The mentorship I received during these projects underscored the importance of giving back to the community, a principle that I continue to uphold in my personal and professional life.

Overall, the advice and support from these mentors have been instrumental in my growth. They have taught me to approach challenges with resilience, to value continuous learning, and to embrace my unique path with confidence. Their influence has not only guided my decisions but has also instilled in me a profound appreciation for the power of mentorship in shaping a successful and fulfilling journey.

Making Friends and Building Relationships

One of the most rewarding aspects of university life was the opportunity to forge deep and meaningful connections with peers from diverse backgrounds. Through shared experiences and mutual support, I discovered the power of friendship and camaraderie. From late-night study sessions to spontaneous weekend adventures, my friends, a mix of university acquaintances, high school friends, and those I met through extracurricular activities, became my pillars of strength, offering laughter, encouragement, and unwavering support through life's ups and downs. Together, we navigated the complexities of university life, forming bonds that would endure long after graduation.

I believe that within social constructs, the average human being has three circles of friendships: the largest one being acquaintances—people you vaguely know; the second one being friends—people you truly share a mutual understanding with and enjoy having around; and finally, the small circle of close friends—people you love and trust with, dare I say, your life.

As someone who, aside from engaging in co-curricular activities, would rarely interact with others, I cherished the people who took it upon themselves to care about and love me for who I am. Especially the friends I had who didn't attend the same university as me; at first, they were all I had before I felt comfortable enough to socialize on campus. They would call me out on weekends, and we would go on spontaneous adventures or dine at aesthetic restaurants that we shouldn't have been able to afford as students. They lifted my spirits, gave me a break from all the coursework, and quite frankly, kept me sane.

As I gained confidence, I formed several friendships on campus with people I truly adore and who share similar mindsets. These friendships were more than just casual acquaintances—they were lifelines, anchors in a sea of uncertainty and change. From my roommate, who became like a sister to me, to classmates who became my study partners and confidants, each friendship added richness and depth to my university experience, shaping the person I am today.

Exploring Kenya's Culture and History

As a student of history and culture, I seized every opportunity to immerse myself in Kenya's rich heritage and traditions. From visiting historical sites and museums to attending cultural festivals and events, each experience deepened my appreciation for the vibrant tapestry of my country's identity.

Many of my adventures were with my cousins, who were always up for an adventure, while others were with my friends. Just to give a brief history: I went to Bomet, Nairobi, climbed mountains, visited Paradise Lost, took several road trips to Naivasha, and saw waterfalls in various locations in Kenya, such as Fourteen Falls.

I particularly loved excursions with my cousins since being the eldest, I had a lot of responsibilities and rarely had time to myself where I was not catering to everyone else. Even as grown-ups, my cousins even as big as they are now, never really changed their quirks. They were still very bright and imaginative, and still harbored that wonderful lustrous glint in his eye when he came up with an idea or when something absolutely fascinated him. They were aging in body and mind, but at heart, they were still the children they were all those years ago, and I absolutely adored them for it.

With my friends, I would go on random gallivanting sprees to see art galleries and museums in Nairobi. We especially loved art galleries, as did many people our age at the time, all seeking to seem more sophisticated and cultured to fit societal standards. For myself, however, the art resonated with my artistic side—the same side that fell in love with literature and poetry.

Whether exploring the bustling streets of Nairobi or embarking on rural excursions, I reveled in the beauty and diversity of Kenya's landscape, discovering new facets of its culture and history with each adventure.

Internship and Professional Development

During my three years at university, I embarked on various internships that provided invaluable hands-on experience in my chosen field of study and the skills I had previously acquired after high school. From corporate placements to grassroots organizations, each attachment offered a unique opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges.

Given that my father worked in business and had connections in the corporate world, I secured internships in the tech sector after my second year. My volunteering experience in church proved beneficial, leading to a well-paid attachment in the tech sector. I approached every task with dedication, believing that even the most mundane assignments could shape my future. I absorbed as much as I could from my superiors and made every effort to excel, despite the rigorous demands.

Traveling to and from work daily was cumbersome and exhausting, often leaving me discouraged by the long commutes from Thika to the work areas. Nevertheless, I excelled in my performance and made significant strides in applying my skills in chemistry, data analytics, and backend development. These experiences not only honed my expertise but also broadened my perspective on my chosen career path. Through mentorship and guidance, I navigated the complexities of the professional world, laying a solid foundation for future success and fulfillment.

Personal Growth and Self-Discovery

University is a transformative journey of personal growth and self-discovery, challenging me to confront my fears, embrace my vulnerabilities, and pursue my passions with unwavering determination. Each triumph I've experienced has emerged from moments of near defeat. As a woman in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), I faced an already rigged job market and societal constraints, making my career opportunities and expectations markedly different from my male counterparts.

Despite the extra risks and constraints associated with being a young woman in society, I have managed to overcome obstacles and surpass the expectations I set for myself. From periods of triumph to times of uncertainty, I learned to navigate life's uncertainties with grace and resilience. Through introspection and reflection, I unearthed hidden strengths and confronted lingering insecurities. This journey of self-discovery allowed me to find solace in the pursuit of knowledge, purpose, and meaning, emerging stronger, wiser, and more self-assured each day.

Lessons Learned

From my mentorship experiences, I have gained several key lessons and values that have significantly shaped my approach to challenges and opportunities. One of the most profound lessons is the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity. Michelle Strong's journey, marked by her determination to pursue a career in IT despite familial opposition, taught me that staying true to one's passions and goals requires resilience and a steadfast commitment. This lesson has empowered me to face challenges head-on, embracing obstacles as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks.

Another crucial lesson I learned is the value of continuous learning and adaptability. The guidance from my professors emphasized that true learning extends beyond textbooks and classrooms. Applying theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, as I did during my internships, highlighted the necessity of being adaptable and open to new experiences. This value has influenced my approach to both academic and professional challenges, encouraging me to seek practical solutions and remain flexible in the face of evolving circumstances.

Furthermore, the mentorship I received through community projects underscored the importance of networking and effective communication. These experiences taught me that building meaningful relationships and collaborating with others are essential for personal and professional success. The ability to connect with diverse individuals and convey ideas clearly has become a cornerstone of my approach to both opportunities and challenges.

Lastly, I have learned the significance of giving back to the community. My mentors in community outreach emphasized the impact of contributing to the greater good, a principle that has shaped my perspective on success and fulfillment. This value has inspired me to seek ways to support and uplift others, reinforcing the idea that true achievement is not only measured by personal success but also by the positive impact one has on the lives of others.

Overall, these lessons and values have profoundly influenced my approach to life's challenges and opportunities. They have instilled in me a sense of resilience, adaptability, effective communication, and a commitment to making a positive difference, guiding me in both my personal and professional endeavors.

Overcoming Obstacles and Challenges

No journey is without its obstacles, and mine was no exception. From academic setbacks to personal struggles, I encountered numerous challenges on the road to graduation. Yet, each setback presented an opportunity for growth and resilience. With perseverance and determination, I confronted adversity head-on, refusing to be defined by circumstances beyond my control. Whether navigating financial hardships, overcoming academic hurdles, or facing

personal setbacks, I emerged stronger and more resilient, guided by an unwavering belief in my ability to overcome life's challenges with grace and fortitude.

Graduation and Future Plans

As I stand on the brink of graduation, I am filled with a profound sense of accomplishment and anticipation for the future that lies ahead. The culmination of years of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice, this milestone represents not an end but a new beginning. Armed with knowledge, experience, and a boundless sense of possibility, I eagerly embrace the opportunities and challenges that await me beyond the university gates. Whether pursuing further studies, embarking on a career, or exploring new avenues of personal and professional growth, I am confident in my ability to navigate life's uncertainties with courage, resilience, and determination.

Conclusion

My university journey has been a testament to the transformative power of education, resilience, and the pursuit of one's dreams. From the halls of academia to the corridors of self-discovery, I have embarked on a deeply personal odyssey marked by triumphs, challenges, and moments of profound growth. As I reflect on the chapters that have unfolded, I am filled with gratitude for the experiences, friendships, and lessons learned along the way. Though my university days may soon come to an end, the lessons learned and memories cherished will endure, guiding me forward on the path to a future filled with promise, purpose, and possibility.