

Maxwell Gogo Autobiography

Introduction

In the heart of Kisumu, where the waters of Lake Victoria lap gently against the shore, my story begins. I am Maxwell Gogo, born in 2002, a son of the Luo people and a child of the digital age. This autobiography is a testament to the journey that has shaped me - from the bustling markets of my childhood to the cutting-edge laboratories of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology.

As you turn these pages, you'll walk with me through the corridors of Jamaa Primary School, where my love for learning first took root. You'll feel the weight of responsibility as I put on the uniform of Starehe Boys' Center, an institution that molded not just my mind, but my character. And you'll experience the thrilling discovery as I delve into the world of Information Technology at DEKUT, where technology is valued to create a great future. But this is not just a story of academic achievement. It's a narrative woven with the threads of friendship forged on dusty football fields, the melodies of classical music that soothe my soul, and the timeless tales found in the pages of historical books. It's a chronicle of a young man striving to bridge the gap between tradition and innovation, between the wisdom of the elders and the possibilities of tomorrow.

As I write these words at the age of 22, I stand at the threshold of a future bright with promise yet shrouded in uncertainty. The rapid advancements in technology that so captivate me are reshaping our world in ways we're only beginning to understand. Through my story, I invite you to explore not just where I've been, but where we - as a society increasingly defined by our relationship with technology - might be heading. This autobiography is more than a recounting of events. It's an exploration of identity, a celebration of culture, and a reflection on the role each of us plays in shaping the future. It's a story of dreams nurtured in the heart of Africa, ready to take flight on the global stage.

So, dear reader, I invite you to join me on this journey. Let's explore together the path that has led me here, and the road that stretches out before us, filled with endless possibilities. Welcome to my world. Welcome to my story.

Chapter 1: My Roots

The scotching rays of the sun were just beginning to dance on the surface of Lake Victoria when I took my first breath in Kisumu Milimani Hospital on a warm 17th day of June in 2002. My mother often tells me that my cry was as strong as the Nyando River during the rainy season, a story that never fails to make my siblings chuckle. It had been a long awaited day for my dad as he had anticipated probably a girl to be born to balance the child equation in the family and to my elder brother the nine years of first and lastborn play had just come to an end. Some would say it was a mixture of emotions for both of them, nevertheless the chubby (back then due to President Moi's Nyayo milk), timid boy was officially the second born child and fourth in the family with the name Maxwell, a sign of future prospects of wealth being given to him.

Kisumu, the lakeside city that would shape my early years, has always been a place that is so dear to my heart. It's ever vibrant shores of Lake Victoria, the ever busy and largest East Africa open-air market of Kibuye where businesses flourish on Sunday's, made a great difference to the man I became. Not forgetting the now closed beach of Lwang'ni where family times would be enjoyed with the humongous size of fish that could be eaten regardless of age or stomach size. It was always a place to call home (not forgetting my Luhya friends since Ugali would always accompany the fish). This city bustling with lots of serene places to chill and have reflections of your life, was also a place popularly known as the home of chaos where stones would never be left unturned after every election. I've happened to be part of the generation that saw our famous 'Baba' lose in 2007, 2013, 2017 and 2022 and indeed the sights of police and the people of Kisumu dancing the tunes of teargas and stones is an interesting one to behold, probably a story to tell my grandchildren in years to come. The news of the death of innocent lives being lost is indeed not a strange one having lost my very own uncle in 2013 who had a heart disease and would succumb to the same ailment after a sudden scare from the protesters while travelling in a bus. Thus, this is something I can relate with, but the question remains, how long will these extrajudicial deaths continue?

Our home, a modest but warm abode in the KenyaRe neighborhood on the outskirts of Kisumu city, was always filled with the aroma of my mother's cooking and the lively discussions of my father and his friends during the early years of my life. Often times the memories of the friendships fostered due the hospitality of my mother remain freshly engrossed in my mind. Our

neighbors who had grown fond of my timidity as a crying baby, would come to babysit me and their smiles brought joy to a just maturing young one and of course my mother who was always busy. This joyful mood which at first seemed to be the very atmosphere of our home would soon be cut short after 2 years of my existence. On a fateful day where my dad had just had a visit to his doctor's office and being confirmed that he had contracted malaria, decided to rest at home till he felt better to go back to work. This anticipation for better would later on become a tale for our family. My ever clingy brother who by then was very close to him as the firstborn of the family was requested by my dad to get some drinking water. Little did he know that this would be the last request from our protective and affectionate father. To cut the long story short, he soundly slept on the couch and never woke up again. That marked the very beginning of the many sorrows and trials that would face our family in the years that followed on.

I would talk of the many stories of my father, yet what stands out is the fact that all I know was but a story told by my elder brother when I was old enough to grasp such important things about my life. All along I had thought my elder brother was my brother considering that he was 9 years older than me. I had to accept this painful reality and indeed how painful it was to realize the only father figure I had was my brother. No trace of memories of my dad could be found in my developing feeble brain and thus I had to accept the truth as it was and surprisingly reject bills at 22. Nevertheless, the gap left was filled with my ever loving and charming mother who never let us feel like something was amiss yet was ever present for us when we needed anything. This greatly impacted my growth as an infant and later on in my life.

Not forgetting the fact that the Luo culture is engraved in the very fabric of my DNA, I wouldn't dare keep silent about how it shaped my growth. It definitely comes along with a little pride bearing with the fact that it's an international language whether you deny it or accept it, it's up to you. This culture possesses a lot of rich traditions beginning from the respect of elders and plenty of foodstuffs such as fish and drinking uji with the famous 'agwata' or calabash as some may call it. It's strong sense of community, was indeed the backdrop against which my childhood unfolded. I remember being mesmerized by my grandfather's stories during our family gatherings in Kanga-Migori County, where tales of our forefathers and their wisdom were passed down through generations. These stories made me to appreciate my culture and as well the traditions passed down to us by our forefathers.

My mother, a primary school teacher with a passion for literature and studies, filled our home with books. The numerous story books ranging from 'Goat Matata', 'Alibaba and the forty thieves', 'The muddy wedding' among others would be the first thing you meet in our home. Even before I could read, I would spend hours flipping through pages, captivated by the mysterious symbols that I knew held countless stories and knowledge. The most important of all this was the bible which was read to us every evening to ensure we were morally upright and a reminder that all that we received was by God's grace, a norm in the family. My mother greatly emphasized on this and never gave room for doubting any of its sayings. As her famous statement would be, "We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget how the Lord has led us in our past history." This would often sink very deep knowing very well the struggles we had undergone after the tragic loss of our father. All this seemed to be but a mere story and little did I know then that this early exposure would ignite a lifelong love for reading and learning.

My mother, being full of compassion and resilient in all she did both at work and in the family, thus taught me the value of service and hard work. It was from her that I learned the importance of caring for others and the power of a kind word or gesture. She would often go all the way to her last coin to ensure we were comfortable and happy wherever we were. Fortunately, my mother had been able to conceive twins just a little while after my dad had passed away and thus in them was hope amidst all that pain that we had gone through after his demise. A smile on her face was always an assurance of better days to come and indeed the days were not only better but the best so long as the love and care in the family remained our song and theme all through while we grew up.

Well, my elder brother (by then known as 'mzee' or Steve by name) who all along had been close to my father had to learn quite a lot after his demise. The love and constant care from him was now but a memory he had to hold dear to but just like him, it had to slowly die in order for him to accept what had happened, and live happily for the rest of his life. He had to step up and be the father figure in his fifth class in primary school. From always being under the care of a maid, he now had to grow up and learn the basic responsibilities of life in the hardest way and indeed hard it was. Many struggles shaped him in his high school life, from learning how to wash his own clothes and take care of his property which to him seemed a mountain that was

insurmountable yet would become the very lesson that the young Max would pick to help him navigate through high school life and as well in adulthood.

Steve would soon break the family's academic targets to become the highest national examinations top scorer in the family due to his hard work. From the easiest KCPE exams scoring a 401 marks and the probably toughest KCSE exams which up to date he prides himself of. He would then go further and become the first engineer in the family having ardently pursued a bachelor of science in Telecommunication and Information Engineering at Multimedia University(Nairobi) and graduated with a classy second-class upper division. What a performance that had been! He had just set a standard that seemed unattainable to most of us. The bar was too high and the expectations elevated for those of us who were growing up after him. He became the talk of relatives from the envious ones who probably were never happy with his brilliance in matters academics and most important of them all, an encouragement to the stubborn kids in the family. This indeed impacted them in a good way as they saw someone they could look up to and of course his dreams became theirs as long as they were in school. In a nutshell, all this excellent performance would not only bring great happiness to the family but also acted as a catalyst to my great academic journey.

As the second born in this family of four children, I quickly had to learn to be more hardworking in my academics and life as well. My elder brother had just set lofty heights for academics and as well my younger twin siblings were looking up to me and thus I had to up my game. The young ones became my first playmates and of course pupils as I eagerly taught and shared with them everything I was learning about our world in the few years of my existence. They were three years younger than me and so all this knowledge I was imparting to them at first seemed a bit unreasonable to them but it acted as a stepping stone to a life of fulfillment and growth in their lives and as well as mine. They grew up being fond of me, the ever charming and jovial Max. This gave them a sense of security as I was always there for them and the constant games we played would be a great source of happiness and laughter for them.

In this early years, our upbringing was marked with lots of good and bad experiences. First of all, the ever annoying presence of maids to take care of us seemed a bit frustrating. My mother was always busy with work stuff and so as to ensure we were well taken care of, she employed a maid for this herculean task. At first it always seemed so enjoyable to have someone taking care

of us other than my mother but with time the constant arrogance and rudeness of these maids would make our lives so boring. The constant rebukes and beatings marked the routine of our daily activities at home, but obviously I wouldn't blame them. I had always been a cheeky child and a playful one as well. Once in my childhood, there was an instance where due to my likeness for a gorgeous classmate whom I could not withhold my admiration whenever I was around her due to her eye-catching beauty, requested me to accompany her home from school. I just wish I knew better. Considering myself to be a gentleman, I decided not to decline the offer I had for so long yearned for. By then I was just 8 years' old that is a class two pupil. This was indeed a sign of disobedience as it was always a norm for our house help to pick me up after school. On arriving home after this amazing experience with my childhood 'crush', the joyful face of satisfaction soon seized and panic engraved the fabric of my heart due to fear of punishment and indeed I reaped the fruits of my labor. I was thoroughly beaten for the pain I had caused my mother and house help as they had looked for me everywhere. All this greatly changed my perspective of life, as I knew you can never have things going your way but always putting others in the decisions I make so that I don't cause pain to them due to my choices. What a lesson that was!

Having given an overview of the beating I received which was definitely not a correction but a beating as earlier stated, a great change was wrought in my life just after getting used to the amazing friends in KenyaRe estate. In the place we had been staying for so many years, my mother decided that we had to relocate. We moved to the quiet estate of Nyamasaria in Kisumu which seemed more of a village than an estate. The many bushes around being a habitat for squirrels which scared us every now and then would be the constant sight to behold on a daily basis. At first it was a great battle accepting the fact that I had to make new friends but all this distress was cut short by the arrival of someone who would not only be a friend but more of a second sister whom I never had. Esther with all her brilliance and captivating confidence, and her family became our neighbors in 2010 when I was just settling in my new school and my twin siblings had just been admitted to nursery school in the same school I was studying. She quickly became a close friend and indeed we shared a lot in common. She was a class ahead of me despite of the fact that I was a year older than her. This brought lots of argument between us as she would often use that as an excuse to mock me and make me feel younger than her. Nevertheless, the fact remains that she's way younger than me and the only difference is that her

parent made her skip some classes back in my nursery school and now had to bear the shame and mockery.

The very essence of my childhood happiness was brought by the constant presence and moments I had shared with my childhood friend. The games played especially the so called 'Kalongolongo' which is more of a parental home game for kids marked the epitome of this joyful moments. I was always a father and was happily wedded to her which is something my siblings always joke about till now. It was one of a kind as it felt more interesting to play such games in my young age as I was slowly growing to be the person I am today. The academic competitions we had as friends also inspired me to study more to ensure was performing better than her at the end of the term. Often times she would outshine me but the game never ended. She had aspired to be a neurosurgeon and I was also striving to be a computer scientist. How funny it is that now I'm pursuing IT and she's just completed her Bachelor of Science in Microbiology and Biotechnology at the University of Nairobi. It is indeed a fact that our constant competition shaped us to who we are right today and it is something I am grateful for.

The common lunches shared, swimming together on holidays at multiple hotels ranging from the luxurious Sunset Hotel, to the affordable Royal City hotel in Nyamasaria, the national park trips at Impala and constant family times shared made our life worthwhile. Esther's family became part of our family and this love we had was something most people envied about us. Our families had so much in common. First of all, both our parents were teachers though of different calibers yet that was exactly something to be proud of. Secondly, we were all from the same countryside, that is Migori County. Many times we had travelled home together and it seemed like we just had one family from different mothers. Thirdly, we both went to the same church and every single Saturday we would all go to church together very early in the morning. Lastly, both our families only had single mothers ringing us up and thus that gave us a source of comfort and meeting people with the same challenge we had. This friendship greatly impacted our lives and became a haven of joy for everyone in the family.

Well, my pen would dry up if I wrote all the amazing and sad experiences I had in my childhood days, yet these very brief moments shared made my life worth the living and indeed God has been gracious to our family for as long as I've lived. The good moments outweighed the bad ones many of the times. There is definitely one thing I would never forget. My mother had

always been so consistent when it came to ensuring we visited our father's rural home. All along everything as it seemed was well until my grandfather passed away in 2012. He had been my mother's source of strength and as just after his untimely demise all this vanished. The family which seemed to have been pretending all along then began to show us their true colors. My dad had built a home for us in our rural home with everything that we needed including furniture and household items. My grandmother who by then accused my mother of being a thief took all that was in the house including the house, with the help of my uncles. This indeed brought great sorrow to my mother as many times she would sob painfully in her room and being a young child I only noticed what had transpired. All these, made us to completely forsake our father's rural home and since then it remains history as we cut all ties with them ever since.

The Kisumu of my childhood was a city on the cusp of change. I remember the excitement in the air when the first cybercafé opened in our neighborhood while I was just a little boy. Although I was too young to understand its significance then, that small shop with its humming computers would later play a crucial role in sparking my interest in technology. The first years of its existence was characterized with lots of theft cases due the fact that it had quality devices and a range of computers. Regardless of all that, it still impacted our community to a great extent that most of us now pursue careers in technology as a result of the exposure we had in our childhood. Though the cyber café had to be closed down a few years later, many more residents in the area soon realized how important the shop was to them. More business oriented and technologically enthusiastic men and women began businesses that sparked up the growth of our village or as some said, our small estate. Nyamasaria grew to be a town in short span of time in a way that still perplexes me. From the dual superhighway that definitely sparked this growth to the Royal city hotel belonging to the former prime minister of this great country, honorable Raila Odinga. From tiny grass thatched muddy houses to the now classy high rise apartments. Supermarkets then followed, bank agents, fancy furniture shops and hotels and motels marked the changed for this small town confirming the fact that change is the only constant thing in life.

Looking back, those early years in Kisumu laid the foundation for the person I would become. The blend of traditional Luo values and the gradual influx of modern influences created a unique environment that nurtured my curiosity and adaptability. The lakeside city, with its warm people

and rich culture, will always be the place where my story began, the roots from which I would grow and branch out into the world.

As I close my eyes, I can still hear the distant sound of the lake's waves and the cheerful calls of market vendors at Kibuye market. Kisumu city, my first home, remains a cherished chapter in the story of my life, a constant reminder of where I come from and the values that continue to guide me on my journey.

Chapter 2: Interesting Days at Jamaa

From my infant days which turned to years, I became so infatuated with joining school. My journey began at the Salvation Army Nursery School at three years' old. The school was just miles away from the Kisumu city center and thus my mother would often drop me off before going to her workplace every morning and later pick me up in the evening. This became her norm till the time I finally graduated out of preschool life. The days in my nursery school were mostly filled with games and coloring lessons which is not a new thing for children in their infant years. The most memorable times were the sleeping afternoons which I truly loved with no academic work involved. My class teacher Mrs. Loise never gave us a chance to even blink during such sessions, the mere attempt to do so would lead to severe punishment from her.

I was not only a good sleeper in my nursery school years, but also very hardworking in my academics. I was among the top performers so many times despite the fact that I was sick many times during the examination period. The least position I ever attained was the seventh position which was definitely on one of my sick days. Many would actually think I'm being proud by saying this, but just imagine if I'm unwell and I still perform brilliantly, what of the days I'm healthy? It's a question you can answer for yourself. I definitely would never disappoint your thoughts and expectations.

After my graduation from nursery school, I had to go through several interviews so as to be admitted to a new school and proceed with my primary school education. The most outstanding of them all was Jamaa Nursery and Primary School in Kisumu. It was a well-performing private school just a few kilometers from where we had relocated to. The questions asked indeed seemed basic but were answered just as they were expected and I luckily got admitted. This marked the

beginning of a new journey for the many years to come and beautiful memories to be engraved forever in my mind.

The day I stepped through the gates of Jamaa Primary School in 2009 as a pupil marked a new chapter in my young life. As my mother smoothed down the collar of my crisp new school uniform, I felt a mix of excitement and anxiety due to the fact that I had never before been in such a big school with many students. That day became the longest of all I had before. No friends to talk to, no parent to cry to and the new environment altogether made my first day miserable. Little did I know that the next eight years at Jamaa would shape me in ways I couldn't yet imagine.

The classrooms at Jamaa were a far cry from the cozy familiarity of my home and my previous school I had just come from. Rows of wooden desks, the chalkboard looming at the front, and the occasional flutter of a textbook page created an atmosphere both stimulating and intimidating for a new and young student. But it was the teachers, with their unwavering dedication and high expectations, who truly left an indelible mark on me. They greatly impacted how we settled into the school and the many times they said all will be well just made the difference. And indeed this assurance made a great change in my first few weeks.

Mrs. Norah, my Standard 1 teacher, quickly became a firm favorite. With her infectious laugh and warm embrace, she made the transition to primary school feel like a homecoming. Under her guidance, I discovered a love for mathematics, spending hours meticulously solving problems and delighting in the patterns that emerged. From the simple calculations of additions, subtractions to the complex multiplications and divisions.

As I progressed through the grades, my interests began to diversify. Mr. Owili's social studies lessons transported me to distant lands and ancient civilizations, sparking a passion for learning about the past that would stay with me for years to come. The history of my country as well brought so much interest in this amazing subject as I desired to understand why our forefathers had to struggle for our independence. This was something I had never heard before.

Additionally, we occasionally had computer lessons and got exposed to how they work and how to handle them. It was in Mrs. Adhiambo's computer lesson that I first encountered this mesmerizing world of technology, my fingers dancing across the keyboard as I learned the basics of using a computer.

But primary school was not just about academics; it was also a time of profound social and personal growth. During breaks and after-school activities, I formed strong friendships that would become the bedrock of my support system all through my primary school years. Cruise David, with his boundless energy and infectious optimism, became my closest companion, and together we would spend hours perfecting our skills on the football pitch. He would often be my opponent to ensure I outshined him and for mockery sake after the game. This not only ended in the football pitch but as well in examinations we had a stiff competition to perform better than the other person. The only obstacle we had was a young girl by name Angentrix who had severally held the first position since I joined the school. We had to channel our energies to defeat her and that only happened after four years of hard work and struggle and indeed it brought so much joy to Cruise and I as our goal was achieved.

It was on those sun-drenched afternoons, chasing a worn leather ball across the Jamaa grounds, that I discovered my love for the beautiful game. The thrill of scoring a goal, and the lessons of teamwork and resilience I learned on the field would stay with me long after the final whistle blew. I was fortunate enough to represent my school in my teenage years in both the zonal, sub county and county games which was a great honor. I played football as a passion, volleyball being that I was tall in the school though short in the competitions with public schools and handball which I had to fill up the team so as to have all players on the field. These gaming moments and the music festivals attended were just but a stepping to greater heights of my existence. They gave me more confidence and belief in myself and what I could achieve if I only gave my best to what I was to do.

As I approached the end of my primary school journey, I found myself torn between excitement for the next chapter and a bittersweet nostalgia for the familiar. Jamaa had become a home away from home, a place where I had blossomed from a shy, curious child into a confident young man, eager to take on the challenges that lay ahead. The academic trips to Nakuru National Park, Maasai Mara National Reserve, Impala Game Sanctuary, Lake Bogoria among many others were but a snippet of the amazing experience I had in my primary school.

The day I bid farewell to Jamaa, after completing my Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2016, I knew that the foundation laid in those hallowed halls would continue to support me for years to come. I soon would receive exemplary results after many years of resilience and hard

work. I proudly scored 406 marks which was way below my expectations during the year that the first class of Matiang'i era did their exams and indeed most of the students were disappointed. Nevertheless, this made history in my primary school as I was among the top performers in our county. To crown this whole story up, the lessons, the friendships, and the memories I had forged would forever be a part of who I am – a testament to the transformative power of education and the enduring bonds of childhood.

Chapter 3: The Starehe Experience Begins

It had all been a dream until the day I received the invitation to join Starehe Boys' Center and School, my childhood dream school. It seemed so good to be true, but after all the congratulatory messages it was now time to join this prestigious school. It was one of a kind. I had received a gift of travelling by air for the good performance and for sure that experience was one of a kind. The hospitable air hostesses and calming demeanor of my aunt and my cousin, Ian who was also joining the same school, made it worth memorable. To worsen the situation was the fact that I had never been to Nairobi or boarded a plane before. All I had to do was to learn from what I saw and pretend as if I was not that villager from Nyamasaria, and that I did. The following day I stood before the towering gates of Starehe Boys' Center which is just a few miles from the city capital, my heart raced with a mixture of excitement and fear. After eight formative years at Jamaa Primary, I was about to embark on a new adventure, one that would challenge me in ways I had never imagined.

As I stepped onto this great and prestigious institution, the energy of Starehe enveloped me. The sound of lively chatter, the disciplined marching of prefects, and the grand colonial-style buildings all signaled that this was no ordinary school. I was now part of a tradition that had shaped the lives of generations of Kenyan leaders and innovators. The statue or rather a monument of the 3G'S as popularly caught my eyes as it uniquely spoke of the value this great school placed on its traditions and values and as well the founding fathers (Dr. Griffin, Mr. Gikubu and Mr. Geturo)

The first few weeks were a whirlwind of adjustments. Navigating the bustling schedule, adhering to the strict code of conduct, and finding my place within the diverse student body were all daunting tasks. The early waking up time which I had never experienced since Jamaa Primary

was a day school and all along I had never been to a boarding school. The food was indeed not of the same taste I had while at home but what choice did I have. In the very first I was admitted in the school's clinic probably due to home sickness as you might be thinking, but to your disappointment I had contracted malaria. It took me weeks to recover and settle in what I knew was my dream school. After weeks of battling between accepting the school and maybe considering transferring to another school, I found roses among the thorns. The Starehe culture, with its emphasis on excellence, character, and community, gave me so much interest in the school and that would ultimately shape me in profound ways.

My initial struggles were tempered by the camaraderie of my newfound classmates. Onduso, a soft-spoken but brilliant young Kisii boy, became my closest confidant, and together we would spend hours in the library, exploring subjects that we both had found interest in as a form one. It was during these conversations that I discovered my love for classical music, a passion that would eventually become a source of solace and inspiration. This would also lead me to join the school's matching band though for a while. The drums had been a great source of inspiration and I desired to know more about music through pursuing this new found passion. It only took me two terms of constant practice and later on left the band as a result of feeling out of place and of course the many responsibilities that came with being a form one. It is something that I regret and hope to pursue this passion probably after my campus life.

As I delved deeper into the Starehe experience, I began to appreciate the school's rich history and the legacy it upheld. The stories of distinguished alumni, shared during assemblies and house meetings, ignited a sense of pride and responsibility within me. The likes of Hon. Peter Kenneth, the late Ken Okoth (MP Kibera), the late Education Cabinet Secretary Magoha, Peter Ndegwa (Safaricom CEO), just to mention but a few were always joining us in the school assemblies. I resolved to not only excel academically but to also embody the Starehe values of service, integrity, and leadership.

The demands of Starehe were relentless, but they forged me into a more resilient and disciplined individual. Whether it was the grueling physical training during cadet camps or the meticulous preparation for inter-house competitions, I learned the value of perseverance and the rewards that come from pushing beyond my own perceived limits.

It was during these transformative years that I truly began to grasp the power of education. The caliber of my teachers, who were not merely imparting knowledge but actively shaping young minds, awed and inspired me. Their passion for their subjects and their unwavering belief in our potential fueled my own intellectual curiosity and drive.

As I approached the end of my time at Starehe, I found myself torn between sadness at the thought of leaving behind the only home I had known for the past four years and excitement for the next chapter of my life. Starehe had become a part of my identity, a crucible that had tempered my character and ignited my ambitions. The many years of leadership as a house prefect and captain of Muriuki House and Chairperson of SDA society indeed groomed me to possess great values and as well become the man I am today.

As I signed out of the school in April 2021 after completing my final national exams, I knew that the lessons I had learned, the bonds I had forged, and the values I had internalized would continue to guide me long after I had left the hallowed grounds of Starehe Boys' Center. It was with a heart full of gratitude and a renewed sense of purpose that I bid farewell to this transformative chapter of my life.

Chapter 4: Academic Journey at Starehe

The transition from primary school to the rigorous academic environment of Starehe Boys' Center was a daunting one, but it was also a testament to the strength of the foundation I had built at Jamaa. Starehe was more of a hub for many brilliant students from all over the country and thus it brought so much fear within me as I wondered how I could outshine the masters in matters academics. That very year we had the top student in the country being one of us in the school and indeed it was never an easy thing to speak before this great minds who were considered the crème de la crème of the country. As I immersed myself in the challenging curriculum, I discovered a newfound passion for subjects that had previously been mere obligations.

History, once a fascination, now became a deep well of knowledge that I eagerly explored. With the help of Mrs. Simiyu, I delved into the intricacies of world events, tracing the threads that connected the past to the present. The way he brought historical figures to life, weaving their stories into the larger tapestry of human civilization, ignited a burning desire within me to

understand the forces that have shaped our world. The thoughts of agrarian revolution, the basic explanation of history as a subject and its essence greatly intrigued my mind. I naturally loved the subject even more.

My affinity for mathematics, nurtured by Mrs. Norah and Mr. Olwanda Fred in my primary school days, blossomed under the guidance of Mrs. Nyakeriga. Her love and devotion for mathematics, infectious enthusiasm and innovative teaching methods transformed what had once been a mere subject into a captivating language of patterns and logic. I found myself spending hours in the library, working on complex calculations and equations and delighting in the ah-ha moments that came with each breakthrough. It was, however, in the realm of computer studies that I truly discovered my calling. Mr. Wahome an ever fascinating face, held classes that were a revelation, as she masterfully made known to us the inner workings of technology and empowered us to become active participants in the digital revolution. From learning the fundamentals of dealing with computer hardware and software to exploring the latest advancements in technology such as artificial intelligence and internet of things, I was enthralled by the endless possibilities that technology held.

Beyond the classroom, Starehe provided a wealth of extracurricular opportunities that allowed me to explore my diverse interests. The school's impressive music program introduced me to the captivating world of classical compositions, and I found myself ever spending hours in the music room trying to learn the piano. The most interesting of them all was the hymn Thursday sessions we had every week where we'd be taught a new hymn. It greatly impacted my singing interest and inspired me to learn new songs that I didn't know before.

On the sports field, I continued to hone my skills in football, representing my class in various inter-class and house tournaments and leagues. I would later on bear the name 'Van Dijk' as a result of being a great defender and player while on the sports field. The camaraderie of my teammates, the thrill of competition, and the lessons of discipline and teamwork I learned on the pitch were invaluable in shaping my character and resilience.

As I navigated the academic rigors of Starehe, I also found time to indulge in my love for historical literature. The school's well-stocked library became a sanctuary, where I would lose myself in the pages of books that transported me to past eras and introduced me to the ideas that have shaped the course of human civilization.

Through it all, I was supported by a dedicated network of teachers and mentors who saw the potential in me and pushed me to excel. Their unwavering belief in my abilities, combined with the encouragement of my newfound friends, fueled my determination to make the most of the Starehe experience.

As I approached the final chapter of my time at the institution, I found myself reflecting on the transformative journey I had undertaken. The shy, curious child who had once stepped through those towering gates had blossomed into a confident, well-rounded young man, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values that would serve as the foundation for the next stage of my life.

Chapter 5: Transition to University Life

It had indeed been a journey. From the lowly suburbs of Nyamasaria to Nairobi Eastleigh and now I had just placed by KUCCPS to join Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT) in Nyeri. At first I was disappointed as it was my first time to hear of it, but after much contemplation and thought I decided to join this institution as I had no option. The only thing that made me hopeful was the fact that it was exemplary in technology and engineering courses and being that I was to pursue a Bachelor of Science in IT, that was the only assurance I needed.

The campus, sprawled across the verdant hills of Nyeri, was a stark contrast to the urban bustle of Nairobi which I had grown fond of. As I navigated the winding paths, I couldn't help but marvel at the sheer scale of the institution – the state-of-the-art laboratories, the well-stocked library, and the diverse community of students and faculty. This greatly sparked my interest to know more about the school and for sure the first day was day of walks around the campus.

During the orientation week, I was immediately struck by the sense of camaraderie and support that permeated the campus. Lecturers and administrators, eager to share their wisdom, took us under their wings, guiding us through the maze of registration, course curriculum, and campus life. It was in these early days that I met Joseph, a fellow first year student whose unwavering determination and infectious laughter would soon become a constant in my university experience.

As the first semester commenced, I found myself navigating a vastly different academic landscape. The pace was more demanding, the coursework more rigorous, and the level of independence required was a far cry from the structured environment of Starehe. Yet, I was energized by the challenge, fueled by the realization that I was now shaping my own educational journey.

In my introductory IT courses, I was captivated by the depth and breadth of the field. Delving into programming languages, calculus I, and emerging technologies, I found myself constantly in awe of the rapid advancements transforming the digital world. It was during one particularly engaging lecture on C programming that I knew, without a doubt, that this was the path I was meant to pursue.

Beyond the classroom, I immersed myself in the vibrant extracurricular life at DEKUT. The ever welcoming DeKUSDA church received me with warm arms. I not only found a place to call home but as well found a family I could rely on. This would become a place to develop leadership skills and as well to impact lives. In my first year, I also attended schools to motivate students on matters academics, spiritual life and social life especially SDA students. Kagumo School and Bishop Gatimu Girls' School are some of the schools I attended, and it was indeed impactful discourses.

My first year would not only be marked with desire to learn new things on a daily basis, but I also excelled in my academics. I managed to be third in our class after all the hard work and resilience I had put in my academic work. The recognition from the university indeed inspired that I could soar to greater heights if I could strive to achieve more and set the right goals and work towards them. This was indeed one of a kind as I reflected the journey of transformation I had gone through over the years.

Balancing the demands of my studies, my athletic pursuits, and my evolving social life was no easy feat, but I drew strength from the support system I had built at DEKUT. Sam, my classmate-turned-confidante, became a constant source of encouragement, and together we would spend countless hours studying, tackling complex coding challenges and sharing our dreams for the future. As my first year at DEKUT drew to a close, I found myself reflecting on how much I had grown, both intellectually and personally. The shy, uncertain boy who had first set foot on this campus had been transformed by the experiences, relationships, and opportunities

that had unfolded before him. It was with a renewed sense of purpose and a deep appreciation for the path that lay ahead that I welcomed the start of my second year, eager to continue the journey that had brought me to this vibrant institution.

Chapter 6: Diving Deep into IT

As I immersed myself in the IT program at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, I found myself captivated by the vastness and complexity of the field. What had once been a fascination with the mechanics of technology had now blossomed into a deep, all-consuming passion. Ranging from cyber security, artificial intelligence, mobile and website development, database management, internet of things among others proved how broad this field was.

The coursework, developed by the IT department at DeKUT, challenged me to push the boundaries of my understanding. From the basic IT essentials to C-programming language taught in the first year brought the burning desire to learn more in every single class I attended, and indeed I was longed for them. It was in the computer labs, however, that I truly found my stride. Under the guidance of graduate assistants, I improved my programming skills, experimenting with various languages and frameworks. The thrill of watching lines of code come to life, transforming abstract ideas into tangible solutions, was a sensation I couldn't get enough of.

One particular project, my finally year course project which was car detailing mobile app was one of a kind. I managed to use React Native language which I am still learning up to date, Node Js, Express Js and MongoDB to ease and provide car detailing services to car owners from their convenient location. This greatly boosted confidence in coding as I had never before done a complete project.

But DEKUT's IT program was not just about theoretical concepts and practical applications – it was also about fostering a deep appreciation for the societal impact of technology. In thought-provoking lectures, we explored the ethical considerations, the implications for privacy and security, and the potential for technology to drive positive change in the world. These discussions, challenged me to look beyond the technical aspects of my studies and consider the broader context in which technology operates. It was during these moments that I realized the true significance of the path I had chosen – to be not just a skilled practitioner, but a

conscientious innovator who could harness the power of technology to improve lives of others in the country.

As I now approach the end of my university experience, I find myself reflecting on the remarkable transformation that has unfolded. The young ambitious man who had reported to DEKUT's campus was now fueled by an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a burning desire to make a meaningful impact on the world.

Chapter 7: Looking to the Future

As I sit here, reflecting on the winding path that has brought me to this point, I am overcome with a deep sense of gratitude and a renewed determination to embrace the possibilities that lie ahead. The journey through my childhood, my formative years at Jamaa and Starehe, and my transformative experience at DEKUT has indelibly shaped who I am today – a young man poised to make his mark on the world.

Throughout my life, I have been driven by desire and curiosity to push the boundaries of my own potential. This thirst for knowledge and growth from within has been the guiding force behind my academic pursuits, my extracurricular involvements, and my personal relationships. It is this same spirit that now propels me forward, as I contemplate the next chapter of my life.

In the realm of technology, my passion continues to burn brighter with each passing day. The rapid advancements in fields like mobile application development, cyber security have captivated my imagination, and I am eager to be at the forefront of these cutting-edge developments. As I look to the future, I see myself not just as a skilled practitioner, but as a visionary who can use the power of technology to solve real-world problems and improve the lives of people around the world.

Beyond the purely technical aspects of my work, I am deeply committed to the ethical and societal implications of the technologies I help create. The many seminars and meetings I have attended over the years have instilled in me a strong sense of responsibility – a recognition that the innovations we bring to life have far-reaching consequences, both positive and negative. It is my goal to be a voice for responsible innovation, ensuring that technology serves to empower and uplift humanity, rather than divide or oppress.

As I contemplate the path ahead, I am also drawn to the idea of continuing my education, perhaps pursuing a master's degree or exploring specialized certifications. The thrill of academic discovery, of pushing the boundaries of human knowledge, is a siren call that I am eager to heed. I envision myself delving into groundbreaking research, collaborating with brilliant minds, and contributing to the advancement of my field in meaningful ways.

Yet, even as I set my sights on lofty professional goals, I remain grounded in the values and relationships that have sustained me throughout my life. The lessons of teamwork, resilience, and service that I learned on the football pitch and in the Starehe community will continue to guide my actions. And the friendships, like the one I share with Joseph, will be the bedrock upon which I build my future, a constant source of support and inspiration.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Indeed, the story has been told and so much more awaits. It has always been my desire, to be a man of substance and value to the society. And now as I stand on the edge of completing my degree in Information Technology at DeKUT, I find myself reflecting on the journey that has brought me to this point my time at DeKUT has been transformative, not just in terms of acquiring technical skills, but in shaping my perspective on the world and my role within it. I've learned that success is not just about mastering the latest technology, but about understanding how these tools can be used to create positive change and solve real-world problems.

As I prepare to embark on this next chapter, I am filled with a sense of both anxiety and excitement. The road ahead may be uncertain, but I am confident that by the knowledge I have already overcome so many challenges, and that the foundations I have built will continue to serve me well. With every step, I am eager to learn, to grow, and to leave an indelible mark on the world around me – a legacy that honors the journey that has brought me to this pivotal moment in time.